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HAROLD

THE LAST OF THE SAXON KINGS

"Attest the betrothal of these young hearts, O ye Powers."

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By

EDWARD BULWER LYTTON

Illustrated by

MAX R. MORTON

VOLUME I

Charles Scribner's Sons
New York 1902

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DEDICATORY EPISTLE

TO

THE RIGHT HON. C. T. D'EYNCOURT, M.P.

I dedicate to you, my dear friend, a work, principally composed under your hospitable roof; and to the materials of which your library, rich in the authorities I most needed, largely contributed.

The idea of founding an historical romance on an event so important and so national as the Norman Invasion, I had long entertained, and the chronicles of that time had long been familiar to me. But it is an old habit of mine, to linger over the plan and subject of a work, for years, perhaps, before the work has, in truth, advanced a sentence; "busying myself," as old Burton saith, "with this playing labour—*otiosâque diligentiâ ut vitarem torporem feriandi.*"

The main consideration which long withheld me from the task, was in my sense of the unfamiliarity of the ordinary reader with the characters, events, and, so to speak, with the very physiognomy of a period *ante Agamemnona;* before the brilliant age of matured chivalry, which has given to song and romance the deeds of the later knighthood, and the glorious frenzy of the Crusades. The Norman Conquest was our Trojan War; an epoch beyond which our learning seldom induces our imagination to ascend.

In venturing on ground so new to fiction, I saw before me the option of apparent pedantry, in the obtrusion of such research as might carry the reader along with the Author, fairly and truly into the real records of the time; or of throwing aside pretensions to accuracy altogether;—and so rest contented to turn history into flagrant romance, rather than pursue my own conception of extracting its natural romance from

the actual history. Finally, not without some encouragement from you, (whereof take your due share of blame!) I decided to hazard the attempt, and to adopt that mode of treatment which, if making larger demand on the attention of the reader, seemed the more complimentary to his judgment.

The age itself, once duly examined, is full of those elements which should awaken interest, and appeal to the imagination. Not untruly has Sismondi said, that the "Eleventh Century has a right to be considered a great age. It was a period of life and of creation; all that there was of noble, heroic, and vigorous in the Middle Ages commenced at that epoch."[1] But to us Englishmen in especial, besides the more animated interest in that spirit of adventure, enterprise, and improvement, of which the Norman chivalry was the noblest type, there is an interest more touching and deep in those last glimpses of the old Saxon monarchy, which open upon us in the mournful pages of our chroniclers.

I have sought in this work, less to portray mere manners, which modern researches have rendered familiar to ordinary students in our history, than to bring forward the great characters, so carelessly dismissed in the long and loose record of centuries; to show more clearly the motives and policy of the agents in an event the most memorable in Europe; and to convey a definite, if general, notion of the human beings, whose brains schemed, and whose hearts beat, in that realm of shadows which lies behind the Norman Conquest;

> "Spes hominum cæcos, morbos, votumque, labores,
> Et passim toto volitantes æthere curas."[2]

I have thus been faithful to the leading historical incidents in the grand tragedy of Harold, and as careful as contradictory evidences will permit, both as to accuracy in the delineation of character, and correct-

[1] Sismondi's History of France, vol. iv. p. 484.
[2] "Men's blinded hopes, diseases, toil, and prayer,
And winged troubles peopling daily air."

ness in that chronological chain of dates without which there can be no historical philosophy; that is, no tangible link between the cause and the effect. The fictitious part of my narrative is, as in "Rienzi," and the "Last of the Barons," confined chiefly to the private life, with its domain of incident and passion, which is the legitimate *appanage* of novelist or poet. The love story of Harold and Edith is told differently from the well-known legend, which implies a less pure connection. But the whole legend respecting the *Edeva faira* (Edith the fair) whose name meets us in the "Domesday" roll, rests upon very slight authority considering its popular acceptance;[1] and the reasons for my alterations will be sufficiently obvious in a work intended not only for general perusal, but which on many accounts, I hope, may be entrusted fearlessly to the young; while those alterations are in strict accordance with the spirit of the time, and tend to illustrate one of its most marked peculiarities.

More apology is perhaps due for the liberal use to which I have applied the superstitions of the age. But with the age itself those superstitions are so interwoven—they meet us so constantly, whether in the pages of our own croniclers, or the records of the kindred Scandinavians—they are so intruded into the very laws, so blended with the very life, of our Saxon forefathers, that without employing them, in somewhat of the same credulous spirit with which they were originally conceived, no vivid impression of the Peo-

[1] Merely upon the obscure MS. of the Waltham Monastery; yet, such is the ignorance of popular criticism, that I have been as much attacked for the license I have taken with the *legendary* connection between Harold and Edith, as if that connection were a proven and authenticated fact! Again, the pure attachment to which, in the romance, the loves of Edith and Harold are confined, has been alleged to be a sort of moral anachronism,—a sentiment wholly modern; whereas, on the contrary, an attachment so pure was infinitely more common in that day than in this, and made one of the most striking characteristics of the eleventh century; indeed of all the earlier ages, in the Christian era, most subjected to monastic influences.

ple they influenced can be conveyed. Not without truth has an Italian writer remarked, "that he who would depict philosophically an unphilosophical age, should remember that, to be familiar with children, one must sometimes think and feel as a child."

Yet it has not been my main endeavour to make these ghostly agencies conducive to the ordinary poetical purposes of terror, and if that effect be at all created by them, it will be, I apprehend, rather subsidiary to the more historical sources of interest than, in itself, a leading or popular characteristic of the work. My object, indeed, in the introduction of the Danish Vala especially, has been perhaps as much addressed to the reason as to the fancy, in showing what large, if dim, remains of the ancient "heathenesse" still kept their ground on the Saxon soil, contending with and contrasting the monkish superstitions, by which they were ultimately replaced. Hilda is not in history; but without the romantic impersonation of that which Hilda represents, the history of the time would be imperfectly understood.

In the character of Harold—while I have carefully examined and weighed the scanty evidences of its distinguishing attributes which are yet preserved to us—and, in spite of no unnatural partiality, have not concealed what appear to me its deficiences, and still less the great error of the life it illustrates,—I have attempted, somewhat and slightly, to shadow out the ideal of the pure Saxon character, such as it was then, with its large qualities undeveloped, but marked already by patient endurance, love of justice, and freedom—the manly sense of duty rather than the chivalric sentiment of honour—and that indestructible element of practical purpose and courageous will, which, defying all conquest, and steadfast in all peril, was ordained to achieve so vast an influence over the destinies of the world.

To the Norman Duke, I believe, I have been as lenient as justice will permit, though it is as impossible to deny his craft as to dispute his genius; and so far as the scope of my work would allow, I trust that I have

indicated fairly the grand characteristics of his countrymen, more truly chivalric than their lord. It has happened, unfortunately for that illustrious race of men, that they have seemed to us, in England, represented by the Anglo-Norman kings. The fierce and plotting William, the vain and worthless Rufus, the cold-blooded and relentless Henry, are no adequate representatives of the far nobler Norman vavasours, whom even the English Chronicler admits to have been "kind masters," and to whom, in spite of their kings, the after liberties of England were so largely indebted. But this work closes on the Field of Hastings; and in that noble struggle for national independence, the sympathies of every true son of the land, even if tracing his lineage back to the Norman victor, must be on the side of the patriot Harold.

In the notes, which I have thought necessary aids to the better comprehension of these volumes, my only wish has been to convey to the general reader such illustrative information as may familiarise him more easily with the subject-matter of the book, or refresh his memory on incidental details not without a national interest. In the mere references to authorities I do not pretend to arrogate to a fiction the proper character of a history; the references are chiefly used either where wishing pointedly to distinguish from invention what was borrowed from a chronicle, or when differing from some popular historian to whom the reader might be likely to refer, it seemed well to state the authority upon which the difference was founded.[1]

In fact, my main object has been one that compelled me to admit graver matter than is common in romance, but which I would fain hope may be saved from the charge of dulness by some national sympathy between author and reader; my object is attained, and attained only, if, in closing the last page of this work, the reader shall find that, in spite of the fictitious materials admitted, he has formed a clearer and more intimate

[1] Notes less immediately necessary to the context, or too long not to interfere with the current of the narrative, are thrown to the end of the work.

acquaintance with a time, heroic though remote, and characters which ought to have a household interest to Englishmen, than the succinct accounts of the mere historian could possibly afford him.

Thus, my dear D'Eyncourt, under cover of an address to yourself, have I made to the Public those explanations which authors in general (and I not the least so) are often overanxious to render.

This task done, my thoughts naturally fly back to the associations I connected with your name when I placed it at the head of this epistle. Again I seem to find myself under your friendly roof; again to greet my provident host entering that gothic chamber in which I had been permitted to establish my unsocial study, heralding the advent of majestic folios, and heaping libraries round the unworthy work. Again, pausing from my labour, I look through that castle casement, and beyond that feudal moat, over the broad landscapes which, if I err not, took their name from the proud brother of the Conqueror himself; or when, in those winter nights, the grim old tapestry waved in the dim recesses, I hear again the Saxon thegn winding his horn at the turret door, and demanding admittance to the halls from which the prelate of Bayeux had so unrighteously expelled him[1]—what marvel, that I lived in the times of which I wrote, Saxon with the Saxon, Norman with the Norman—that I entered into no gossip less venerable than that current at the Court of the Confessor, or startled my fellow-guests (when I deigned to meet them) with the last news which Harold's spies had brought over from the Camp at St. Valery? With all those folios, giants of the gone world, rising around me daily, more and more, higher and higher—Ossa upon Pelion—on chair and table, hearth and floor; invasive as Normans, indomitable as Saxons, and tall as the tallest Danes (ruthless host, I behold them still!)—with all those disburied spectres rampant in the chamber, all the

[1] There is a legend attached to my friend's house, that on certain nights in the year, Eric the Saxon winds his horn at the door, and, *in forma spectri,* serves his notice of ejectment.

armour rusting in thy galleries, all those mutilated statues of early English kings (including St. Edward himself)—niched into thy grey, ivied walls—say in thy conscience, O host, (if indeed that conscience be not wholly callous!) shall I ever return to the nineteenth century again?

But far beyond these recent associations of a single winter (for which heaven assoil thee!) goes the memory of a friendship of many winters, and proof to the storms of all. Often have I come for advice to your wisdom, and sympathy to your heart, bearing back with me, in all such seasons, new increase to that pleasurable gratitude which is, perhaps, the rarest, nor the least happy sentiment, that experience leaves to man. Some differences, it may be,—whether on those public questions which we see, every day, alienating friendships that should have been beyond the reach of laws and kings;—or on the more scholastic controversies which as keenly interest the minds of educated men,—may at times deny to us the *idem velle, atque idem nolle;* but the *firma amicitia* needs not those common links; the sunshine does not leave the wave for the slight ripple which the casual stone brings a moment to the surface.

Accept, in this dedication of a work which has lain so long on my mind, and been endeared to me from many causes, the token of an affection for you and yours, strong as the ties of kindred, and lasting as the belief in truth.

E. B. L.

PREFACE TO THE THIRD EDITION

The author of an able and learned article on MABILLON [1] in the "Edinburgh Review," has accurately described my aim in this work; although, with that generous courtesy which characterises the true scholar, in referring to the labours of a contemporary, he has overrated my success. It was indeed my aim "to solve the problem how to produce the greatest amount of dramatic effect at the least expense of historical truth"—I borrow the words of the Reviewer, since none other could so tersely express my design, or so clearly account for the leading characteristics in its conduct and completion.

There are two ways of employing the materials of History in the service of Romance: the one consists in lending to ideal personages, and to an imaginary fable, the additional interest to be derived from historical groupings: the other, in extracting the main interest of romantic narrative from History itself. Those who adopt the former mode are at liberty to exclude all that does not contribute to theatrical effect or picturesque composition; their fidelity to the period they select is towards the manners and costume, not towards the precise order of events, the moral causes from which the events proceeded, and the physical agencies by which they were influenced and controlled. The plan thus adopted is unquestionably the more popular and attractive, and, being favoured by the most illustrious writers of historical romance, there is presumptive reason for supposing it to be also that which is the more agreeable to the art of fiction.

[1] The "Edinburgh Review," No. CLXXIX. January, 1849. Art. I. "Correspondance inédite, de Mabillon et de Montfaucon, avec l'Italie." Par M. Valéry. Paris, 1848.

But he who wishes to avoid the ground pre-occupied by others, and claim in the world of literature some spot, however humble, which he may "plough with his own heifer," will seek to establish himself not where the land is the most fertile, but where it is the least enclosed. So, when I first turned my attention to Historical Romance, my main aim was to avoid as much as possible those fairer portions of the soil that had been appropriated by the first discoverers. The great author of Ivanhoe, and those amongst whom, abroad and at home, his mantle was divided, had employed History to aid Romance; I contented myself with the humbler task to employ Romance in the aid of History,—to extract from authentic but neglected chronicles, and the unfrequented storehouse of Archæology, the incidents and details that enliven the dry narrative of facts to which the general historian is confined,—construct my plot from the actual events themselves, and place the staple of such interest as I could create in reciting the struggles, and delineating the characters, of those who had been the living actors in the real drama. For the main materials of the three Historical Romances I have composed, I consulted the original authorities of the time with a care as scrupulous, as if intending to write, not a fiction but a history. And having formed the best judgment I could of the events and characters of the age, I adhered faithfully to what, as an Historian, I should have held to be the true course and true causes of the great political events, and the essential attributes of the principal agents. Solely in that inward life which, not only as apart from the more public and historical, but which, as almost wholly unknown, becomes the fair domain of the poet, did I claim the legitimate privileges of fiction, and even here I employed the agency of the passions only so far as they served to illustrate what I believed to be the genuine natures of the beings who had actually lived, and to restore the warmth of the human heart to the images recalled from the grave.

Thus, even had I the gifts of my most illustrious predecessors, I should be precluded the use of many of

the more brilliant. I shut myself out from the wider scope permitted to their fancy, and denied myself the license to choose or select materials, alter dates, vary causes and effects according to the convenience of that more imperial fiction which invents the Probable where it discards the Real. The mode I have adopted has perhaps only this merit, that it is my own—mine by discovery and mine by labour. And if I can raise not the spirits that obeyed the great master of romance, nor gain the key to the fairyland that opened to his spell,—at least I have not rifled the tomb of the wizard to steal my art from the book that lies clasped on his breast.

In treating of an age with which the general reader is so unfamiliar as that preceding the Norman Conquest, it is impossible to avoid (especially in the earlier portions of my tale) those explanations of the very character of the time which would have been unnecessary if I had only sought in History the picturesque accompaniments to Romance. I have to do more than present an amusing picture of national manners—detail the dress, and describe the banquet. According to the plan I adopt, I have to make the reader acquainted with the imperfect fusion of races in Saxon England, familiarise him with the contests of parties and the ambition of chiefs, show him the strength and the weakness of a kindly but ignorant church; of a brave but turbulent aristocracy; of a people partially free, and naturally energetic, but disunited by successive immigrations, and having lost much of the proud jealousies of national liberty by submission to the preceding conquests of the Dane; acquiescent in the sway of foreign kings, and with that bulwark against invasion which an hereditary order of aristocracy usually erects, loosened to its very foundations by the copious admixture of foreign nobles. I have to present to the reader, here, the imbecile priestcraft of the illiterate monk, there, the dark superstition that still consulted the deities of the North by runes on the elm bark and adjurations of the dead. And in contrast to those pictures of a decrepit monarchy and a fated race, I

have to bring forcibly before the reader the vigorous attributes of the coming conquerors,—the stern will and deep guile of the Norman chief—the comparative knowledge of the rising Norman Church—the nascent spirit of chivalry in the Norman vavasours; a spirit destined to emancipate the very people it contributed to enslave, associated, as it imperfectly was, with the sense of freedom: disdainful, it is true, of the villein, but proudly curbing, though into feudal limits, the domination of the liege. In a word, I must place fully before the reader, if I would be faithful to the plan of my work, the political and moral features of the age, as well as its lighter and livelier attributes, and so lead him to perceive, when he has closed the book, why England was conquered, and how England survived the Conquest.

In accomplishing this task, I inevitably incur the objections which the task itself raises up,—objections to the labour it has cost; to the information which the labour was undertaken in order to bestow; objections to passages which seem to interrupt the narrative, but which in reality prepare for the incidents it embraces, or explain the position of the persons whose characters it illustrates,—whose fate it involves; objections to the reference to authorities, where a fact might be disputed, or mistaken for fiction; objections to the use of Saxon words, for which no accurate synonyms could be exchanged; objections, in short, to the colouring, conduct, and composition of the whole work; objections to all that separate it from the common crowd of Romances, and stamp on it, for good or for bad, a character peculiarly its own. Objections of this kind I cannot remove, though I have carefully weighed them all. And with regard to the objection most important to story-teller and novel reader—viz., the dryness of some of the earlier portions, though I have thrice gone over those passages, with the stern determination to inflict summary justice upon every unnecessary line, I must own to my regret that I have found but little which it was possible to omit without rendering the after narrative obscure, and without in-

juring whatever of more stirring interest the story, as it opens, may afford to the general reader of Romance.

As to the Saxon words used, an explanation of all those that can be presumed unintelligible to a person of ordinary education, is given either in the text or a foot-note. Such archaisms are much less numerous than certain critics would fain represent them to be: and they have rarely indeed been admitted where other words could have been employed without a glaring anachronism, or a tedious periphrase. Would it indeed be possible, for instance, to convey a notion of the customs and manners of our Saxon forefathers without employing words so mixed up with their daily usages and modes of thinking as "*weregeld*" and "*niddering*"? Would any words from the modern vocabulary suggest the same idea, or embody the same meaning?

One critic good-humouredly exclaims, "We have a full attendance of thegns and cnehts, but we should have liked much better our old friends and approved good masters thanes and knights." Nothing could be more apposite for my justification than the instances here quoted in censure; nothing could more plainly vindicate the necessity of employing the Saxon words. For I should sadly indeed have misled the reader if I had used the word *knight* in an age when knights were wholly unknown to the Anglo-Saxon: and cneht no more means what we understand by knight, than a templar in modern phrase means a man in chain mail vowed to celibacy, and the redemption of the Holy Sepulchre from the hands of the Mussulman. While, since thegn and thane are both archaisms, I prefer the former; not only for the same reason that induces Sir Francis Palgrave to prefer it, viz., because it is the more etymologically correct; but because we take from our neighbours the Scotch, not only the word thane, but the sense in which we apply it; and that sense is not the same that we ought to attach to the various and complicated notions of nobility which the Anglo-Saxon comprehended in the title of thegn. It has been peremptorily said by more than one writer in periodicals,

that I have overrated the erudition of William, in permitting him to know Latin; nay, to have read the Comments of Cæsar at the age of eight.—Where these gentlemen find the authorities to confute my statement I know not; all I know is, that in the statement I have followed the original authorities usually deemed the best. And I content myself with referring the disputants to a work not so difficult to procure as (and certainly more pleasant to read than) the old Chronicles. In Miss Strickland's "Lives of the Queens of England," (Matilda of Flanders,) the same statement is made, and no doubt upon the same authorities.

More surprised should I be (if modern criticism had not taught me in all matters of assumption the *nil admirari*), to find it alleged that I have overstated not only the learning of the Norman duke, but that which flourished in Normandy under his reign; for I should have thought that the fact of the learning which sprung up in the most thriving period of that principality; the rapidity of its growth; the benefits it derived from Lanfranc; the encouragement it received from William, had been phenomena too remarkable in the annals of the age, and in the history of literature, to have met with an incredulity which the most moderate amount of information would have sufficed to dispel. Not to refer such sceptics to graver authorities, historical and ecclesiastical, in order to justify my representations of that learning which, under William the Bastard, made the schools of Normandy the popular academies of Europe, a page or two in a book so accessible as Villemain's "Tableau du Moyen Age," will perhaps suffice to convince them of the hastiness of their censure, and the error of their impressions.

It is stated in the Athenæum, and, I believe, by a writer whose authority on the merits of opera singers I am far from contesting but of whose competence to instruct the world in any other department of human industry or knowledge I am less persuaded, "that I am much mistaken when I represent not merely the clergy but the young soldiers and courtiers of the reign

of the Confessor, as well acquainted with the literature of Greece and Rome."

The remark, to say the least of it, is disingenuous. I have done no such thing. This general animadversion is only justified by a reference to the pedantry of the Norman Mallet de Graville—and it is expressly stated in the text that Mallet de Graville was originally intended for the Church, and that it was the peculiarity of his literary information, rare in a soldier (but for which his earlier studies for the ecclesiastical calling readily account, at a time when the Norman convent of Bec was already so famous for the erudition of its teachers, and the number of its scholars,) that attracted towards him the notice of Lanfranc, and founded his fortunes. Pedantry is made one of his characteristics (as it generally was the characteristic of any man with some pretensions to scholarship, in the earlier ages;) and if he indulges in a classical allusion, whether in taunting a courtier or conversing with a "Saxon from the wealds of Kent," it is no more out of keeping with the pedantry ascribed to him, than it is unnatural in Dominie Sampson to rail at Meg Merrilies in Latin, or James the First to examine a young courtier in the same unfamiliar language. Nor should the critic in question, when inviting his readers to condemn me for making Mallet de Graville quote Horace, have omitted to state that De Graville expressly laments that he had never read, nor could even procure, a copy of the Roman poet—judging only of the merits of Horace by an extract in some monkish author, who was equally likely to have picked up his quotation second-hand.

So, when a reference is made either by Graville, or by any one else in the romance, to Homeric fables and personages, a critic who had gone through the ordinary education of an English gentleman would never thereby have assumed that the person so referring had read the poems of Homer themselves—he would have known that Homeric fables, or personages, though not the Homeric poems, were made familiar, by quaint

travesties,[1] even to the most illiterate audience of the gothic age. It was scarcely more necessary to know Homer then than now, in order to have heard of Ulysses. The writer in the Athenæum is acquainted with Homeric personages, but who on earth would ever presume to assert that he is acquainted with Homer?

Some doubt has been thrown upon my accuracy in ascribing to the Anglo-Saxon the enjoyments of certain luxuries (gold and silver plate—the use of glass, etc.), which were extremely rare in an age much more recent. There is no ground for that doubt; nor is there a single article of such luxury named in the text, for the mention of which I have not ample authority.

I have indeed devoted to this work a degree of research which, if unusual to romance, I cannot consider superfluous when illustrating an age so remote, and events unparalleled in their influence over the destinies of England. Nor am I without the hope, that what the romance-reader at first regards as a defect, he may ultimately acknowledge as a merit;—forgiving me that strain on his attention by which alone I could leave distinct in his memory the action and the actors in that solemn tragedy which closed on the field of Hastings, over the corpse of the Last Saxon King.

[1] And long before the date of the travesty known to us, and most popular amongst our mediæval ancestors, it might be shown that some rude notion of Homer's fable and personages had crept into the North.

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HAROLD,

THE LAST OF THE SAXON KINGS

BOOK I

THE NORMAN VISITOR, THE SAXON KING, AND THE DANISH PROPHETESS

CHAPTER I

Merry was the month of May in the year of our Lord 1052. Few were the boys, and few the lasses, who overslept themselves on the first of that buxom month. Long ere the dawn, the crowds had sought mead and woodland, to cut poles and wreathe flowers. Many a mead then lay fair and green beyond the village of Charing, and behind the isle of Thorney, (amidst the brakes and briars of which were then rising fast and fair the Hall and Abbey of Westminster;) many a wood lay dark in the starlight, along the higher ground that sloped from the dank Strand, with its numerous canals or dykes;—and on either side of the great road into Kent:—flutes and horns sounded far and near through the green places, and laughter and song, and the crash of breaking boughs.

As the dawn came grey up the east, arch and blooming faces bowed down to bathe in the May dew.

Patient oxen stood dozing by the hedge-rows, all fragrant with blossoms, till the gay spoilers of the May came forth from the woods with lusty poles, followed by girls with laps full of flowers, which they had caught asleep. The poles were pranked with nosegays, and a chaplet was hung round the horns of every ox. Then towards daybreak, the processions streamed back into the city, through all its gates; boys with their May-gads (peeled willow wands twined with cowslips) going before; and clear through the lively din of the horns and flutes, and amidst the moving grove of branches, choral voices, singing some early Saxon stave, precursor of the later song—

"We have brought the summer home."

Often in the good old days before the Monk-king reigned, kings and ealdermen had thus gone forth a-maying; but these merriments, savouring of heathenesse, that good prince misliked: nevertheless the song was as blithe, and the boughs were as green, as if king and ealderman had walked in the train.

On the great Kent road, the fairest meads for the cowslip, and the greenest woods for the bough, surrounded a large building that once had belonged to some voluptuous Roman, now all defaced and despoiled; but the boys and the lasses shunned those demesnes; and even in their mirth, as they passed homeward along the road, and saw near the ruined walls, and timbered outbuildings, grey Druid stones (that spoke of an age before either Saxon or Roman invader) gleaming through the dawn—the song was hushed—the very youngest crossed themselves; and the elder, in solemn whispers, suggested the precaution of changing the song into a psalm. For in that old

building dwelt Hilda, of famous and dark repute; Hilda, who, despite all law and canon, was still believed to practise the dismal arts of the Wicca and Morthwyrtha (the witch and worshipper of the dead). But once out of sight of those fearful precincts, the psalm was forgotten, and again broke, loud, clear, and silvery, the joyous chorus.

So, entering London about sunrise, doors and windows were duly wreathed with garlands; and every village in the suburbs had its May-pole, which stood in its place all the year. On that happy day labour rested; ceorl and theowe had alike a holiday to dance, and tumble round the May-pole; and thus, on the first of May—Youth, and Mirth, and Music, "brought the summer home."

The next day you might still see where the buxom bands had been; you might track their way by fallen flowers, and green leaves, and the deep ruts made by oxen (yoked often in teams from twenty to forty, in the wains that carried home the poles); and fair and frequent throughout the land, from any eminence, you might behold the hamlet swards still crowned with the May trees, and air still seemed fragrant with their garlands.

It is on that second day of May, 1052, that my story opens, at the House of Hilda, the reputed Morthwyrtha. It stood upon a gentle and verdant height; and, even through all the barbarous mutilation it had undergone from barbarian hands, enough was left strikingly to contrast the ordinary abodes of the Saxon.

The remains of Roman art were indeed still numerous throughout England, but it happened rarely that the Saxon had chosen his home amidst the villas of

those noble and primal conquerors. Our first forefathers were more inclined to destroy than to adapt.

By what chance this building became an exception to the ordinary rule, it is now impossible to conjecture, but from a very remote period it had sheltered successive races of Teuton lords.

The changes wrought in the edifice were mournful and grotesque. What was now the Hall, had evidently been the atrium; the round shield, with its pointed boss, the spear, sword, and small curved sæx of the early Teuton, were suspended from the columns on which once had been wreathed the flowers; in the centre of the floor, where fragments of the old mosaic still glistened from the hard-pressed paving of clay and lime, what now was the fire-place had been the impluvium, and the smoke went sullenly through the aperture in the roof, made of old to receive the rains of heaven. Around the Hall were still left the old cubicula or dormitories, (small, high, and lighted but from the doors,) which now served for the sleeping-rooms of the humbler guest or the household servant; while at the farther end of the Hall, the wide space between the columns, which had once given ample vista from graceful awnings into tablinum and viridarium, was filled up with rude rubble and Roman bricks, leaving but a low, round, arched door, that still led into the tablinum. But that tablinum, formerly the gayest state-room of the Roman lord, was now filled with various lumber, piles of faggots, and farming utensils. On either side of this desecrated apartment, stretched, to the right, the old lararium, stripped of its ancient images of ancestor and god; to the left, what had been the gynœcium (women's apartment).

One side of the ancient peristyle, which was of vast extent, was now converted into stabling, sties for swine, and stalls for oxen. On the other side was constructed a Christian chapel, made of rough oak planks, fastened by plates at the top, and with a roof of thatched reeds. The columns and wall at the extreme end of the peristyle were a mass of ruins, through the gigantic rents of which loomed a grassy hillock, its sides partially covered with clumps of furze. On this hillock were the mutilated remains of an ancient Druidical crommel, in the centre of which (near a funeral mound, or barrow, with the bautastean, or gravestone, of some early Saxon chief at one end) had been sacrilegiously placed an altar to Thor, as was apparent both from the shape, from a rude, half-obliterated, sculptured relief of the god, with his lifted hammer, and a few Runic letters. Amidst the temple of the Briton the Saxon had reared the shrine of his triumphant war-god.

Now still, amidst the ruins of that extreme side of the peristyle which opened to this hillock were left, first, an ancient Roman fountain, that now served to water the swine, and next, a small sacellum, or fane to Bacchus (as relief and frieze, yet spared, betokened): thus the eye, at one survey, beheld the shrines of four creeds: the Druid, mystical and symbolical; the Roman, sensual, but humane; the Teutonic, ruthless and destroying; and, latest risen and surviving all, though as yet with but little of its gentler influence over the deeds of men, the edifice of the Faith of Peace.

Across the peristyle, theowes and swineherds passed to and fro:—in the atrium, men of a higher class, half-armed, were, some drinking, some at dice, some playing with huge hounds, or caressing the hawks that stood grave and solemn on their perches.

The lararium was deserted; the gynœcium was still, as in the Roman time, the favoured apartment of the female portion of the household, and indeed bore the same name,[1]—and with the group there assembled we have now to do.

The appliances of the chamber showed the rank and wealth of the owner. At that period the domestic luxury of the rich was infinitely greater than has been generally supposed. The industry of the women decorated wall and furniture with needlework and hangings: and as a thegn forfeited his rank if he lost his lands, so the higher orders of an aristocracy rather of wealth than birth had, usually, a certain portion of superfluous riches, which served to flow towards the bazaars of the East and the nearer markets of Flanders and Saracenic Spain.

In this room the walls were draped with silken hangings richly embroidered. The single window was glazed with a dull grey glass.[2] On a beaufet were ranged horns tipped with silver, and a few vessels of pure gold. A small circular table in the centre was supported by symbolical monsters quaintly carved. At one side of the wall, on a long settle, some half-a-dozen handmaids were employed in spinning; remote from them, and near the window, sat a

[1] "The apartment in which the Anglo-Saxon women lived, was called Gynecium."—FOSBROOKE, vol. ii., p. 570.

[2] Glass, introduced about the time of Bede, was more common then in the houses of the wealthy, whether for vessels or windows, than in the much later age of the gorgeous Plantagenets. Alfred, in one of his poems, introduces glass as a familiar illustration:

> "So oft the mild sea
> With south wind
> As grey glass clear
> Becomes grimly troubled."
>
> SHAR. TURNER.

woman advanced in years, and of a mien and aspect singularly majestic. Upon a small tripod before her was a Runic manuscript, and an inkstand of elegant form, with a silver graphium, or pen. At her feet reclined a girl somewhat about the age of sixteen, her long hair parted across her forehead and falling far down her shoulders. Her dress was a linen under-tunic, with long sleeves, rising high to the throat, and without one of the modern artificial restraints of the shape, the simple belt sufficed to show the slender proportions and delicate outline of the wearer. The colour of the dress was of the purest white, but its hems, or borders, were richly embroidered. This girl's beauty was something marvellous. In a land proverbial for fair women, it had already obtained her the name of "the fair." In that beauty were blended, not as yet without a struggle for mastery, the two expressions seldom united in one countenance, the soft and the noble; indeed in the whole aspect there was the evidence of some internal struggle; the intelligence was not yet complete; the soul and heart were not yet united: and Edith the Christian maid dwelt in the home of Hilda the heathen prophetess. The girl's blue eyes, rendered dark by the shade of their long lashes, were fixed intently upon the stern and troubled countenance which was bent upon her own, but bent with that abstract gaze which shows that the soul is absent from the sight. So sate Hilda, and so reclined her grandchild Edith.

"Grandam," said the girl in a low voice and after a long pause; and the sound of her voice so startled the handmaids, that every spindle stopped for a moment and then plied with renewed activity; "Grandam, what troubles you—are you not thinking of the

great Earl and his fair sons, now outlawed far over the wide seas?"

As the girl spoke, Hilda started slightly, like one awakened from a dream; and when Edith had concluded her question, she rose slowly to the height of a statue, unbowed by her years, and far towering above even the ordinary standard of men; and turning from the child, her eye fell upon the row of silent maids, each at her rapid, noiseless, stealthy work. "Ho!" said she; her cold and haughty eye gleaming as she spoke; "yesterday they brought home the summer—to-day, ye aid to bring home the winter. Weave well—heed well warf and woof; Skulda[1] is amongst ye, and her pale fingers guide the web!"

The maidens lifted not their eyes, though in every cheek the colour paled at the words of the mistress. The spindles revolved, the thread shot, and again there was silence more freezing than before.

"Askest thou," said Hilda at length, passing to the child, as if the question so long addressed to her ear had only just reached her mind; "askest thou if I thought of the Earl and his fair sons?—yea, I heard the smith welding arms on the anvil, and the hammer of the shipwright shaping strong ribs for the horses of the sea. Ere the reaper has bound his sheaves, Earl Godwin will scare the Normans in the halls of the Monk-king, as the hawk scares the brood in the dovecot. Weave well, heed well warf and woof, nimble maidens—strong be the texture, for biting is the worm."

"What weave they, then, good grandmother?" asked the girl, with wonder and awe in her soft mild eyes.

[1] Skulda, the Norna, or Fate, that presided over the future.

"The winding-sheet of the great!"

Hilda's lips closed, but her eyes, yet brighter than before, gazed upon space, and her pale hand seemed tracing letters, like runes, in the air.

Then slowly she turned, and looked forth through the dull window. "Give me my coverchief and my staff," said she quickly.

Every one of the handmaids, blithe for excuse to quit a task which seemed recently commenced, and was certainly not endeared to them by the knowledge of its purpose communicated to them by the lady, rose to obey.

Unheeding the hands that vied with each other, Hilda took the hood, and drew it partially over her brow. Leaning lightly on a long staff, the head of which formed a raven, carved from some wood stained black, she passed into the hall, and thence through the desecrated tablinum, into the mighty court formed by the shattered peristyle; there she stopped, mused a moment, and called on Edith. The girl was soon by her side.

"Come with me.—There is a face you shall see but twice in life;—this day,"—and Hilda paused, and the rigid and almost colossal beauty of her countenance softened.

"And when again, my grandmother?"

"Child, put thy warm hand in mine. So! the vision darkens from me,—when again, saidst thou, Edith? —alas, I know not."

While thus speaking, Hilda passed slowly by the Roman fountain and the heathen fane, and ascended the little hillock. There on the opposite side of the summit, backed by the Druid crommel and the Teuton altar, she seated herself deliberately on the sward.

A few daisies, primroses, and cowslips, grew around; these Edith began to pluck. Singing, as she wove, a simple song, that, not more by the dialect than the sentiment, betrayed its origin in the ballad of the Norse,[1] which had, in its more careless composition, a character quite distinct from the artificial poetry of the Saxons. The song may be thus imperfectly rendered:

"Merrily the throstle sings
Amid the merry May;
The throstle sings but to my ear;
My heart is far away!

"Blithely bloometh mead and bank;
And blithely buds the tree;
And hark!—they bring the Summer home;
It has no home with me!

"They have outlawed *him*—my Summer!
An outlaw far away!—
The birds may sing, the flowers may bloom,—
O, give me back my May!"

As she came to the last line, her soft low voice seemed to awaken a chorus of sprightly horns and trumpets, and certain other wind instruments peculiar to the music of that day. The hillock bordered the high road to London—which then wound through wastes of forest land—and now emerging from the trees to the left appeared a goodly company. First

[1] The historians of our literature have not done justice to the great influence which the poetry of the Danes has had upon our early national muse. I have little doubt but that to that source may be traced the minstrelsy of our borders, and the Scottish Lowlands; while, even in the central counties, the example and exertions of Canute must have had considerable effect on the taste and spirit of our Scops. That great prince afforded the amplest encouragement to Scandinavian poetry, and Olaus names eight Danish poets, who flourished at his court.

came two riders abreast, each holding a banner. On the one was depicted the cross and five martlets, the device of Edward, afterwards surnamed the Confessor: on the other, a plain broad cross with a deep border round it, and the streamer shaped into sharp points.

The first was familiar to Edith, who dropped her garland to gaze on the approaching pageant; the last was strange to her. She had been accustomed to see the banner of the great Earl Godwin by the side of the Saxon king; and she said, almost indignantly,—

"Who dares, sweet grandam, to place banner or pennon where Earl Godwin's ought to float?"

"Peace," said Hilda, "peace and look."

Immediately behind the standard-bearers came two figures—strangely dissimilar indeed in mien, in years, in bearing: each bore on his left wrist a hawk. The one was mounted on a milk-white palfrey, with housings inlaid with gold and uncut jewels. Though not really old—for he was much on this side of sixty—both his countenance and carriage evinced age. His complexion, indeed, was extremely fair, and his cheeks ruddy; but the visage was long and deeply furrowed, and from beneath a bonnet not dissimilar to those in use among the Scotch, streamed hair long and white as snow, mingling with a large and forked beard. White seemed his chosen colour. White was the upper tunic clasped on his shoulder with a broad ouche or brooch; white the woollen leggings fitted to somewhat emaciated limbs; and white the mantle, though broidered with a broad hem of gold and purple. The fashion of his dress was that which well became a noble person, but it suited ill the somewhat frail and graceless figure of the rider. Nevertheless,

as Edith saw him, she rose, with an expression of deep reverence on her countenance, and saying, "It is our lord the King," advanced some steps down the hillock, and there stood, her arms folded on her breast, and quite forgetful, in her innocence and youth, that she had left the house without the cloak and coverchief which were deemed indispensable to the fitting appearance of maid and matron when they were seen abroad.

"Fair sir, and brother mine," said the deep voice of the younger rider, in the Romance or Norman tongue, "I have heard that the small people of whom my neighbours, the Bretons, tell us much, abound greatly in this fair land of yours; and if I were not by the side of one whom no creature unassoilzed and unbaptised dare approach, by sweet St. Valery I should say—yonder stands one of those same *gentilles fées!*"

King Edward's eye followed the direction of his companion's outstretched hand, and his quiet brow slightly contracted as he beheld the young form of Edith standing motionless a few yards before him, with the warm May wind lifting and playing with her long golden locks. He checked his palfrey, and murmured some Latin words which the knight beside him recognised as a prayer, and to which, doffing his cap, he added an Amen, in a tone of such unctuous gravity, that the royal saint rewarded him with a faint approving smile, and an affectionate "*Bene bene, Piosissime.*"

Then inclining his palfrey's head towards the knoll, he motioned to the girl to approach him. Edith, with a heightened colour, obeyed, and came to the roadside. The standard-bearers halted, as did the king

and his comrade—the procession behind halted—thirty knights, two bishops, eight abbots, all on fiery steeds and in Norman garb—squires and attendants on foot—a long and pompous retinue—they halted all. Only a stray hound or two broke from the rest, and wandered into the forest land with heads trailing.

"Edith, my child," said Edward, still in Norman-French, for he spoke his own language with hesitation, and the Romance tongue, which had long been familiar to the higher classes in England, had, since his accession, become the only language in use at court, and as such every one of "Eorl-kind" was supposed to speak it;—"Edith, my child, thou hast not forgotten my lessons, I trow; thou singest the hymns I gave thee, and neglectest not to wear the relic round thy neck."

The girl hung her head, and spoke not.

"How comes it, then," continued the King, with a voice to which he in vain endeavoured to impart an accent of severity, "how comes it, O little one, that thou, whose thoughts should be lifted already above this carnal world, and eager for the service of Mary the chaste and blessed, standest thus hoodless and alone on the waysides, a mark for the eyes of men? go to, it is naught."

Thus reproved, and in presence of so large and brilliant a company, the girl's colour went and came, her breast heaved high, but with an effort beyond her age she checked her tears, and said meekly, "My grandmother, Hilda, bade me come with her, and I came."

"Hilda!" said the King, backing his palfrey with apparent perturbation, "but Hilda is not with thee; I see her not."

As he spoke, Hilda rose, and so suddenly did her tall form appear on the brow of the hill, that it seemed as if she had emerged from the earth. With a light and rapid stride she gained the side of her grandchild; and after a slight and haughty reverence, said, "Hilda is here; what wants Edward the King with his servant Hilda?"

"Nought, nought," said the King, hastily; and something like fear passed over his placid countenance; "save, indeed," he added, with a reluctant tone, as that of a man who obeys his conscience against his inclination, "that I would pray thee to keep this child pure to threshold and altar, as is meet for one whom our Lady, the Virgin, in due time, will elect to her service."

"Not so, son of Etheldred, son of Woden, the last descendant of Penda should live, not to glide a ghost amidst cloisters, but to rock children for war in their father's shield. Few men are there yet like the men of old; and while the foot of the foreigner is on the Saxon soil no branch of the stem of Woden should be nipped in the leaf."

"*Per la resplendar Dé*,[1] bold dame," cried the knight by the side of Edward, while a lurid flush passed over his cheek of bronze; "but thou art too glib of tongue for a subject, and pratest overmuch of Woden, the Paynim, for the lips of a Christian matron."

Hilda met the flashing eye of the knight with a brow of lofty scorn, on which still a certain terror was visible.

"Child," she said, putting her hand upon Edith's

[1] "By the splendour of God."

fair locks; "this is the man thou shalt see but twice in thy life;—look up, and mark well!"

Edith instinctively raised her eyes, and, once fixed upon the knight, they seemed chained as by a spell. His vest, of a cramoisay so dark, that it seemed black beside the snowy garb of the Confessor, was edged by a deep band of embroidered gold; leaving perfectly bare his firm, full throat—firm and full as a column of granite,—a short jacket or manteline of fur, pendant from the shoulders, left developed in all its breadth a breast, that seemed meet to stay the march of an army; and on the left arm, curved to support the falcon, the vast muscles rose, round and gnarled, through the close sleeve.

In height, he was really but little above the stature of many of those present; nevertheless, so did his port,[1] his air, the nobility of his large proportions, fill the eye, that he seemed to tower immeasurably above the rest.

His countenance was yet more remarkable than his form; still in the prime of youth, he seemed at the first glance younger, at the second older, than he was. At the first glance younger; for his face was perfectly shaven, without even the moustache which the Saxon courtier, in imitating the Norman, still declined to surrender; and the smooth visage and bare throat sufficed in themselves to give the air of youth to that dominant and imperious presence. His small skull-cap left unconcealed his forehead, shaded with short thick hair, uncurled, but black and glossy as the wings of a raven. It was on that forehead that time had set its trace; it was knit into a frown over

[1] See Note (A) at the end of this volume.

the eyebrows; lines deep as furrows crossed its broad, but not elevated expanse. That frown spoke of hasty ire and the habit of stern command; those furrows spoke of deep thought and plotting scheme; the one betrayed but temper and circumstance; the other, more noble, spoke of the character and the intellect. The face was square, and the regard lion-like; the mouth—small, and even beautiful in outline—had a sinister expression in its exceeding firmness; and the jaw—vast, solid, as if bound in iron—showed obstinate, ruthless, determined will; such a jaw as belongs to the tiger amongst beasts, and the conqueror amongst men; such as it is seen in the effigies of Cæsar, of Cortes, of Napoleon.

That presence was well calculated to command the admiration of women, not less than the awe of men. But no admiration mingled with the terror that seized the girl as she gazed long and wistful upon the knight. The fascination of the serpent on the bird held her mute and frozen. Never was that face forgotten; often in after-life it haunted her in the noon-day, it frowned upon her dreams.

"Fair child," said the knight, fatigued at length by the obstinacy of the gaze, while that smile peculiar to those who have commanded men relaxed his brow, and restored the native beauty to his lip, "fair child, learn not from thy peevish grandam so uncourteous a lesson as hate of the foreigner. As thou growest into womanhood, know that Norman knight is sworn slave to lady fair;" and, doffing his cap, he took from it an uncut jewel, set in Byzantine filigree work. "Hold out thy lap, my child; and when thou hearest the foreigner scoffed, set this bauble in thy locks,

and think kindly of William, Count of the Normans." [1]

He dropped the jewel on the ground as he spoke; for Edith, shrinking and unsoftened towards him, held no lap to receive it; and Hilda, to whom Edward had been speaking in a low voice, advanced to the spot and struck the jewel with her staff under the hoofs of the king's palfrey.

"Son of Emma, the Norman woman, who sent thy youth into exile, trample on the gifts of thy Norman kinsman. And if, as men say, thou art of such gifted holiness that Heaven grants thy hand the power to heal, and thy voice the power to curse, heal thy country, and curse the stranger!"

She extended her right arm to William as she spoke, and such was the dignity of her passion, and such its force, that an awe fell upon all. Then dropping her hood over her face, she slowly turned away, regained the summit of the knoll, and stood erect beside the altar of the Northern god, her face invisible through the hood drawn completely over it, and her form motionless as a statue.

"Ride on," said Edward, crossing himself.

"Now by the bones of St. Valery," said William, after a pause, in which his dark keen eye noted the gloom upon the King's gentle face, "it moves much my simple wonder how even presence so saintly can hear without wrath words so unleal and foul. Gram-

[1] It is noticeable that the Norman dukes did not call themselves Counts or Dukes of Normandy, but of the Normans; and the first Anglo-Norman kings, till Richard the First, styled themselves Kings of the English, not of England. In both Saxon and Norman chronicles, William usually bears the title of *Count* (Comes), but in this tale he will be generally called Duke, as a title more familiar to us.

ercy, an the proudest dame in Normandy (and I take her to be wife to my stoutest baron, William Fitz-osborne) had spoken thus to me—"

"Thou wouldst have done as I, my brother," interrupted Edward; "prayed to our Lord to pardon her, and rode on pitying."

William's lip quivered with ire, yet he curbed the reply that sprang to it, and he looked with affection genuinely more akin to admiration than scorn, upon his fellow-prince. For, fierce and relentless as the Duke's deeds were, his faith was notably sincere; and while this made, indeed, the prince's chief attraction to the pious Edward, so, on the other hand, this bowed the Duke in a kind of involuntary and superstitious homage to the man who sought to square deeds to faith. It is ever the case with stern and stormy spirits, that the meek ones which contrast them steal strangely into their affections. This principle of human nature can alone account for the enthusiastic devotion which the mild sufferings of the Saviour awoke in the fiercest exterminators of the North. In proportion, often, to the warrior's ferocity, was his love to that Divine model, at whose sufferings he wept, to whose tomb he wandered barefoot, and whose example of compassionate forgiveness he would have thought himself the basest of men to follow!

"Now, by my halidame, I honour and love thee, Edward," cried the Duke, with a heartiness more frank than was usual to him: "and were I thy subject, woe to man or woman that wagged tongue to wound thee by a breath. But who and what is this same Hilda? one of thy kith and kin?—surely not less than kingly blood runs so bold?"

"William, *bien aimé*," [1] said the King, "it is true that Hilda, whom the saints assoil, is of kingly blood, though not of our kingly line. It is feared," added Edward, in a timid whisper, as he cast a hurried glance around him, "that this unhappy woman has ever been more addicted to the rites of her pagan ancestors than to those of Holy Church; and men do say that she hath thus acquired from fiend or charm secrets devoutly to be eschewed by the righteous. Nathless, let us rather hope that her mind is somewhat distraught with her misfortunes."

The King sighed, and the Duke sighed too, but the Duke's sigh spoke impatience. He swept behind him a stern and withering look towards the proud figure of Hilda, still seen through the glades, and said in a sinister voice: "Of kingly blood; but this witch of Woden hath no sons or kinsmen, I trust, who pretend to the throne of the Saxon?"

"She is sibbe to Githa, wife of Godwin," answered the King, "and that is her most perilous connection; for the banished Earl, as thou knowest, did not pretend to fill the throne, but he was content with nought less than governing our people."

The King then proceeded to sketch an outline of the history of Hilda, but his narrative was so deformed both by his superstitions and prejudices, and his imperfect information in all the leading events and characters in his own kingdom, that we will venture to take upon ourselves his task; and while the train ride

[1] The few expressions borrowed occasionally from the Romance tongue, to give individuality to the speaker, will generally be translated into modern French; for the same reason as Saxon is rendered into modern English, viz., that the words may be intelligible to the reader.

on through glade and mead, we will briefly narrate, from our own special sources of knowledge, the chronicle of Hilda, the Scandinavian Vala.

CHAPTER II

A magnificent race of men were those war sons of the old North, whom our popular histories, so superficial in their accounts of this age, include in the common name of the "Danes." They replunged into barbarism the nations over which they swept; but from that barbarism they reproduced the noblest elements of civilisation. Swede, Norwegian, and Dane, differing in some minor points, when closely examined, had yet one common character viewed at a distance. They had the same prodigious energy, the same passion for freedom, individual and civil, the same splendid errors in the thirst for fame and the "point of honour;" and above all, as a main cause of civilisation, they were wonderfully pliant and malleable in their admixtures with the peoples they overran. This is their true distinction from the stubborn Celt, who refuses to mingle, and disdains to improve.

Frankes, the archbishop, baptised Rolf-ganger:[1] and within a little more than a century afterwards, the descendants of those terrible heathens who had spared neither priest nor altar, were the most redoubtable defenders of the Christian Church; their old language forgotten (save by a few in the town of Bayeux), their ancestral names[2] (save among a few of

[1] "Roman de Rou," part i., v. 1914.

[2] The reason why the Normans lost their old names is to be found in their conversion to Christianity. They were baptised; and Franks, as their godfathers, gave them new appel-

the noblest) changed into French titles, and little else but the indomitable valour of the Scandinavian remained unaltered amongst the arts and manners of the Frankish-Norman.

In like manner their kindred tribes, who had poured into Saxon England to ravage and lay desolate, had no sooner obtained from Alfred the Great permanent homes, than they became perhaps the most powerful, and in a short time not the least patriotic, part of the Anglo-Saxon population.[1] At the time our story opens, these Northmen, under the common name of Danes, were peaceably settled in no less than fifteen [2] counties in England; their nobles abounded in towns and cities beyond the boundaries of those counties

lations. Thus, Charles the Simple insists that Rolf-ganger shall change his law (creed) and his name, and Rolf or Rou is christened Robert. A few of those who retained Scandinavian names at the time of the Conquest will be cited hereafter.

[1] Thus in 991, about a century after the first settlement, the Danes of East Anglia gave the only efficient resistance to the host of the Vikings under Justin and Gurthmund; and Brithnoth, celebrated by the Saxon poet, as a Saxon *par excellence*, the heroic defender of his native soil, was, in all probability, of Danish descent. Mr. Laing, in his preface to his translation of the Heimskringla, truly observes, "that the rebellions against William the Conqueror, and his successors, appear to have been almost always raised, or mainly supported, in the counties of recent Danish descent, not in those peopled by the old Anglo-Saxon race."

The portion of Mercia, consisting of the burghs of Lancaster, Lincoln, Nottingham, Stamford, and Derby, became a Danish state in A.D. 877;—East Anglia, consisting of Cambridge, Suffolk, Norfolk, and the Isle of Ely, in A.D. 879–80; and the vast territory of Northumbria, extending all north the Humber, into all that part of Scotland south of the Frith, in A.D. 876.—See PALGRAVE'S *Commonwealth*. But besides their more allotted settlements, the Danes were interspersed as landowners all over England.

[2] *Bromton Chron.*—viz., Essex, Middlesex, Suffolk, Norfolk, Herts, Cambridgeshire, Hants, Lincoln, Notts, Derby, Northampton, Leicestershire, Bucks, Beds, and the vast territory called Northumbria.

which bore the distinct appellation of Danelagh. They were numerous in London: in the precincts of which they had their own burial-place, to the chief municipal court of which they gave their own appellation—the Hustings.[1] Their power in the national assembly of the Witan had decided the choice of kings. Thus, with some differences of law and dialect, these once turbulent invaders had amalgamated amicably with the native race.[2] And to this day, the gentry, traders, and farmers of more than one-third of England, and in those counties most confessed to be in the van of improvement, descend from Saxon mothers indeed, but from Viking fathers. There was in reality little difference in race between the Norman knight of the time of Henry I. and the Saxon franklin of Norfolk and York. Both on the mother's side would most probably have been Saxon, both on the father's would have traced to the Scandinavian.

But though this character of adaptability was general, exceptions in some points were necessarily found, and these were obstinate in proportion to the adherence to the old pagan faith, or the sincere conversion to Christianity. The Norwegian chronicles, and passages in our own history, show how false and hollow was the assumed Christianity of many of these fierce Odin-worshippers. They willingly enough accepted the outward sign of baptism, but the holy water

[1] PALGRAVE'S *History of England*, p. 315.

[2] The laws collected by Edward the Confessor, and in later times so often and so fondly referred to, contained many introduced by the Danes, which had grown popular with the Saxon people. Much which we ascribe to the Norman Conqueror, pre-existed in the Anglo-Danish, and may be found both in Normandy, and parts of Scandinavia, to this day.—See HAKEWELL'S *Treatise on the Antiquity of Laws in this Island, in* HEARNE'S *Curious Discourses.*

changed little of the inner man. Even Harold, the son of Canute, scarce seventeen years before the date we have now entered, being unable to obtain from the Archbishop of Canterbury—who had espoused the cause of his brother Hardicanute—the consecrating benediction, lived and reigned as one who had abjured Christianity.[1]

The priests, especially on the Scandinavian continent, were often forced to compound with their grim converts, by indulgence to certain habits, such as indiscriminate polygamy. To eat horse-flesh in honour of Odin, and to marry wives *ad libitum*, were the main stipulations of the neophytes. And the puzzled monks, often driven to a choice, yielded the point of the wives, but stood firm on the graver article of the horse-flesh.

With their new religion, very imperfectly understood, even when genuinely received, they retained all that host of heathen superstition which knits itself with the most obstinate instincts in the human breast. Not many years before the reign of the Confessor, the laws of the great Canute against witchcraft and charms, the worship of stones, fountains, runes by ash and elm, and the incantations that do homage to the dead, were obviously rather intended to apply to the recent Danish converts, than to the Anglo-Saxons, already subjugated for centuries, body and soul, to the domination of the Christian monks.

Hilda, a daughter of the royalty of Denmark, and cousin to Githa (niece to Canute, whom that king had bestowed in second spousals upon Godwin), had come over to England with a fierce Jarl, her husband, a year after Canute's accession to the throne—both converted nominally, both secret believers in Thor and Odin.

[1] PALGRAVE'S *History of England*, p. 322.

Hilda's husband had fallen in one of the actions in the Northern seas, between Canute and St. Olave, King of Norway (that saint himself, by the bye, a most ruthless persecutor of his forefathers' faith, and a most unqualified assertor of his heathen privilege to extend his domestic affections beyond the severe pale which should have confined them to a single wife. His natural son Magnus then sat on the Danish throne). The Jarl died as he had wished to die, the last man on board his ship, with the soothing conviction that the Valkyrs would bear him to Valhalla.

Hilda was left with an only daughter, whom Canute bestowed on Ethelwolf, a Saxon Earl of large domains, and tracing his descent from Penda, that old King of Mercia who refused to be converted, but said so discreetly, that he had no objection to his neighbours being Christians, if they would practise that peace and forgiveness which the monks told him were the elements of the faith.

Ethelwolf fell under the displeasure of Hardicanute, perhaps because he was more Saxon than Danish; and though that savage king did not dare openly to arraign him before the Witan, he gave secret orders by which he was butchered on his own hearthstone, in the arms of his wife, who died shortly afterwards of grief and terror. The only orphan of this unhappy pair, Edith, was thus consigned to the charge of Hilda.

It was a necessary and invaluable characteristic of that "adaptability" which distinguished the Danes, that they transferred to the land in which they settled all the love they had borne to that of their ancestors; and so far as attachment to soil was concerned, Hilda had grown no less in heart an Englishwoman than if she had been born and reared amidst the glades and

knolls from which the smoke of her hearth rose through the old Roman compluvium.

But in all else she was a Dane. Dane in her creed and her habits—Dane in her intense and brooding imagination—in the poetry that filled her soul, peopled the air with spectres, and covered the leaves of the trees with charms. Living in austere seclusion after the death of her lord, to whom she had borne a Scandinavian woman's devoted but heroic love,—sorrowing, indeed, for his death, but rejoicing that he fell amidst the feast of ravens,—her mind settled more and more year by year, and day by day, upon those visions of the unknown world, which in every faith conjure up the companions of solitude and grief.

Witchcraft in the Scandinavian North assumed many forms, and was connected by many degrees. There was the old and withered hag, on whom, in our later mediæval ages the character was mainly bestowed; there was the terrific witch-wife, or wolf-witch, who seems wholly apart from human birth and attributes, like the weird sisters of Macbeth—creatures who entered the house at night and seized warriors to devour them, who might be seen gliding over the sea, with the carcase of the wolf dripping blood from their giant jaws; and there was the more serene, classical, and awful vala, or sibyl, who, honoured by chiefs and revered by nations, foretold the future, and advised the deeds of heroes. Of these last, the Norse chronicles tell us much. They were often of rank and wealth, they were accompanied by trains of handmaids and servants—kings led them (when their counsel was sought) to the place of honour in the hall, and their heads were sacred, as those of ministers to the gods.

This last state in the grisly realm of the Wig-lær

(wizard-lore) was the one naturally appertaining to the high rank, and the soul, lofty though blind and perverted, of the daughter of warrior-kings. All practice of the art to which now for long years she had devoted herself, that touched upon the humble destinies of the vulgar, the child of Odin [1] haughtily disdained. Her reveries were upon the fate of kings and kingdoms; she aspired to save or to rear the dynasties which should rule the races yet unborn. In youth proud and ambitious,—common faults with her countrywomen,—on her entrance into the darker world, she carried with her the prejudices and passions that she had known in that coloured by the external sun.

All her human affections were centred in her grandchild Edith, the last of a race royal on either side. Her researches into the future had assured her, that the life and death of this fair child were entwined with the fates of a king, and the same oracles had intimated a mysterious and inseparable connection between her own shattered house and the flourishing one of Earl Godwin, the spouse of her kinswoman Githa: so that with this great family she was as intimately bound by the links of superstition as by the ties of blood. The eldest born of Godwin, Sweyn, had been at first especially her care and her favourite; and he, of more poetic temperament than his brothers, had willingly submitted to her influence. But of all the brethren, as will be seen hereafter, the career of Sweyn had been most noxious and ill-omened; and at that moment, while the rest of the house carried with it into exile

[1] The name of this god is spelt *Odin*, when referred to as the object of Scandinavian worship; *Woden*, when applied directly to the deity of the Saxons.

the deep and indignant sympathy of England, no man said of Sweyn, "God bless him!"

But as the second son, Harold, had grown from childhood into youth, Hilda had singled him out with a preference even more marked than that she had bestowed upon Sweyn. The stars and the runes assured her of his future greatness, and the qualities and talents of the young Earl had, at the very onset of his career, confirmed the accuracy of their predictions. Her interest in Harold became the more intense, partly because whenever she consulted the future for the lot of her grandchild Edith, she invariably found it associated with the fate of Harold—partly because all her arts had failed to penetrate beyond a certain point in their joint destinies, and left her mind agitated and perplexed between hope and terror. As yet, however, she had wholly failed in gaining any ascendancy over the young Earl's vigorous and healthful mind: and though, before his exile, he came more often than any of Godwin's sons to the old Roman house, he had smiled with proud incredulity at her vague prophecies, and rejected all her offers of aid from invisible agencies with the calm reply—"The brave man wants no charms to encourage him to his duty, and the good man scorns all warnings that would deter him from fulfilling it."

Indeed, though Hilda's magic was not of the malevolent kind, and sought the source of its oracles not in fiends but gods, (at least the gods in whom she believed,) it was noticeable that all over whom her influence had prevailed had come to miserable and untimely ends;—not alone her husband and her son-in-law, (both of whom had been as wax to her counsel,) but such other chiefs as rank or ambition permitted

to appeal to her lore. Nevertheless, such was the ascendancy she had gained over the popular mind, that it would have been dangerous in the highest degree to put into execution against her the laws condemnatory of witchcraft. In her, all the more powerful Danish families reverenced, and would have protected, the blood of their ancient kings, and the widow of one of their most renowned heroes. Hospitable, liberal, and beneficent to the poor, and an easy mistress over numerous ceorls, while the vulgar dreaded, they would yet have defended her. Proofs of her art it would have been hard to establish; hosts of compurgators to attest her innocence would have sprung up. Even if subjected to the ordeal, her gold could easily have bribed the priests with whom the power of evading its dangers rested. And with that worldly wisdom which persons of genius in their wildest chimeras rarely lack, she had already freed herself from the chance of active persecution from the Church, by ample donations to all the neighbouring monasteries.

Hilda, in fine, was a woman of sublime desires and extraordinary gifts; terrible, indeed, but as the passive agent of the Fates she invoked, and rather commanding for herself a certain troubled admiration and mysterious pity; no fiend-hag, beyond humanity in malice and in power, but essentially human, even when aspiring most to the secrets of a god. Assuming, for the moment, that by the aid of intense imagination, persons of a peculiar idiosyncrasy of nerves and temperament might attain to such dim affinities with a world beyond our ordinary senses, as forbid entire rejection of the magnetism and magic of old times—it was on no foul and mephitic pool, overhung with the poisonous nightshade, and excluded from the beams of

heaven, but on the living stream on which the star trembled, and beside whose banks the green herbage waved, that the demon shadows fell dark and dread.

Thus safe and thus awful, lived Hilda; and under her care, a rose beneath the funeral cedar, bloomed her grandchild Edith, goddaughter of the Lady of England.

It was the anxious wish, both of Edward and his virgin wife, pious as himself, to save this orphan from the contamination of a house more than suspected of heathen faith, and give to her youth the refuge of the convent. But this, without her guardian's consent or her own expressed will, could not be legally done; and Edith as yet had expressed no desire to disobey her grandmother, who treated the idea of the convent with lofty scorn.

This beautiful child grew up under the influence, as it were, of two contending creeds; all her notions on both were necessarily confused and vague. But her heart was so genuinely mild, simple, tender, and devoted,—there was in her so much of the inborn excellence of the sex, that in every impulse of that heart struggled for clearer light and for purer air the unquiet soul. In manner, in thought, and in person as yet almost an infant, deep in her heart lay yet one woman's secret, known scarcely to herself, but which taught her, more powerfully than Hilda's proud and scoffing tongue, to shudder at the thought of the barren cloister and the eternal vow.

CHAPTER III

While King Edward was narrating to the Norman Duke all that he knew, and all that he knew not, of Hilda's history and secret arts, the road wound through lands as wild and wold-like as if the metropolis of England lay a hundred miles distant. Even to this day patches of such land, in the neighbourhood of Norwood, may betray what the country was in the old time:—when a mighty forest, "abounding with wild beasts"—"the bull and the boar"—skirted the suburbs of London, and afforded pastime to king and thegn. For the Norman kings have been maligned by the popular notion that assigns to them *all* the odium of the forest laws. Harsh and severe were those laws in the reign of the Anglo-Saxon; as harsh and severe, perhaps, against the ceorl and the poor man, as in the days of Rufus, though more mild unquestionably to the nobles. To all beneath the rank of abbot and thegn, the king's woods were made, even by the mild Confessor, as sacred as the groves of the Druids: and no less penalty than that of life was incurred by the lowborn huntsman who violated their recesses.[1]

Edward's only mundane passion was the chase; and a day rarely passed, but what after mass he went forth with hawk or hound. So that, though the regular season for hawking did not commence till October, he had ever on his wrist some young falcon to essay, or some old favourite to exercise. And now, just as William was beginning to grow weary of his good cousin's prolix recitals, the hounds suddenly gave

[1] See Note (B), at the end of the volume.

tongue, and from a sedge-grown pool by the wayside, with solemn wing and harsh boom, rose a bittern.

"Holy St. Peter!" exclaimed the Saint-king, spurring his palfrey, and loosing his famous Peregrine falcon.[1] William was not slow in following that animated example, and the whole company rode at half speed across the rough forest-land, straining their eyes upon the soaring quarry, and the large wheels of the falcons. Riding thus, with his eyes in the air, Edward was nearly pitched over his palfrey's head, as the animal stopped suddenly, checked by a high gate, set deep in a half embattled wall of brick and rubble. Upon this gate sate, quite unmoved and apathetic, a tall ceorl, or labourer, while behind it was a gazing curious group of men of the same rank, clad in those blue tunics of which our peasant's smock is the successor, and leaning on scythes and flails. Sour and ominous were the looks they bent upon that Norman cavalcade. The men were at least as well clad as those of the same condition are now; and their robust limbs and ruddy cheeks showed no lack of the fare that supports labour. Indeed, the working man of that day, if not one of the absolute theowes or slaves, was, physically speaking, better off, perhaps, than he has ever since been in England, more especially if he appertained to some wealthy thegn of pure Saxon lineage, whose very title of lord came to him in his quality of dispenser of bread;[2] and these men had been ceorls under Harold, son of Godwin, now banished from the land.

[1] The Peregrine hawk built on the rocks of Llandudno, and this breed was celebrated, even to the days of Elizabeth. Burleigh thanks one of the Mostyns for a cast of hawks from Llandudno.

[2] Hlaf, loaf,—Hlaford, lord, giver of bread; Hleafdian, lady, server of bread.—VERSTEGAN.

"Open the gate, open quick, my merry men," said the gentle Edward (speaking in Saxon, though with a strong foreign accent), after he had recovered his seat, murmured a benediction, and crossed himself three times. The men stirred not.

"No horse tramps the seeds we have sown for Harold the Earl to reap;" said the ceorl, doggedly, still seated on the gate. And the group behind him gave a shout of applause.

Moved more than ever he had been known to be before, Edward spurred his steed up to the boor, and lifted his hand. At that signal twenty swords flashed in the air behind, as the Norman nobles spurred to the place. Putting back with one hand his fierce attendants, Edward shook the other at the Saxon. "Knave, knave," he cried, "I would hurt you, if I could!"

There was something in these words, fated to drift down into history, at once ludicrous and touching. The Normans saw them only in the former light, and turned aside to conceal their laughter; the Saxon felt them in the latter and truer sense, and stood rebuked. That great king, whom he now recognised, with all those drawn swords at his back, could not do him hurt; that king had not the heart to hurt him. The ceorl sprang from the gate, and opened it, bending low.

"Ride first, Count William, my cousin," said the King, calmly.

The Saxon ceorl's eyes glared as he heard the Norman's name uttered in the Norman tongue, but he kept open the gate, and the train passed through, Edward lingering last. Then said the King, in a low voice,—

"Bold man, thou spokest of Harold the Earl and

his harvests; knowest thou not that his lands have passed from him, and that he is outlawed, and that his harvests are not for the scythes of his ceorls to reap?"

"May it please you, dread Lord and King," replied the Saxon simply, "these lands that were Harold the Earl's, are now Clapa's, the sixhændman's."

"How is that?" quoth Edward, hastily; "we gave them neither to sixhændman nor to Saxon. All the lands of Harold hereabout were divided amongst sacred abbots and noble chevaliers—Normans all."

"Fulke the Norman had these fair fields, yon orchards and tynen; Fulke sold them to Clapa, the Earl's sixhændman, and what in mancusses and pence Clapa lacked of the price, we, the ceorls of the Earl, made up from our own earnings in the Earl's noble service. And this very day, in token thereof, have we quaffed the bedden-ale.[1] Wherefore, please God and our Lady, we hold these lands part and parcel with Clapa; and when Earl Harold comes again, as come he will, here at least he will have his own."

Edward, who, despite a singular simplicity of character, which at times seemed to border on imbecility, was by no means wanting in penetration when his attention was fairly roused, changed countenance at this proof of rough and homely affection on the part of these men to his banished earl and brother-in-law. He mused a little while in grave thought, and then said, kindly—

"Well, man, I think not the worse of you for loyal love to your thegn, but there are those who would do

[1] Bedden-ale. When any man was set up in his estate by the contributions of his friends, those friends were bid to a feast, and the ale so drunk was called the bedden-ale, from bedden, to pray, or to bid. (See BRAND'S *Pop. Antiq.*)

so, and I advise you, brotherlike, that ears and nose are in peril if thou talkest thus indiscreetly."

"Steel to steel, and hand to hand," said the Saxon, bluntly, touching the long knife in his leathern belt, "and he who sets gripe on Sexwolf son of Elfhelm, shall pay his weregeld twice over."

"Forewarned, foolish man, thou art forewarned. Peace," said the King; and, shaking his head, he rode on to join the Normans, who now, in a broad field, where the corn sprang green, and which they seemed to delight in wantonly trampling, as they curvetted their steeds to and fro, watched the movements of the bittern and the pursuit of the two falcons.

"A wager, Lord King!" said a prelate, whose strong family likeness to William proclaimed him to be the Duke's bold and haughty brother, Odo,[1] Bishop of Bayeux;—"a wager. My steed to your palfrey that the Duke's falcon first fixes the bittern."

"Holy father," answered Edward, in that slight change of voice which alone showed his displeasure, "these wagers all savour of heathenesse, and our canons forbid them to mone[2] and priest. Go to, it is naught."

The bishop, who brooked no rebuke, even from his terrible brother, knit his brows, and was about to make no gentle rejoinder, when William, whose profound craft or sagacity was always at watch, lest his followers should displease the King, interposed, and taking the word out of the prelate's mouth, said:

"Thou reprovest us well, Sir and King; we Nor-

[1] Herleve (Arlotta), William's mother, married Herluin de Conteville, after the death of Duke Robert, and had by him two sons, Robert, Count of Mortain, and Odo, Bishop of Bayeux.—Ord. Vital. lib. vii.

[2] *Mone,* monk.

mans are too inclined to such levities. And see, your falcon is first in pride of place. By the bones of St. Valery, how nobly he towers! See him cover the bittern!—see him rest on the wing!—Down he swoops! Gallant bird!"

"With his heart split in two on the bittern's bill," said the bishop; and down, rolling one over the other, fell bittern and hawk, while William's Norway falcon, smaller of size than the King's, descended rapidly, and hovered over the two. Both were dead.

"I accept the omen," muttered the gazing Duke; "let the natives destroy each other!" He placed his whistle to his lips, and his falcon flew back to his wrist.

"Now home," said King Edward.

CHAPTER IV

The royal party entered London by the great bridge which divided Southwark from the capital; and we must pause to gaze a moment on the animated scene which the immemorial thoroughfare presented.

The whole suburb before entering Southwark was rich in orchards and gardens, lying round the detached houses of the wealthier merchants and citizens. Approaching the river-side, to the left, the eye might see the two circular spaces set apart, the one for bear, the other for bull-baiting. To the right, upon a green mound of waste, within sight of the populous bridge, the gleemen were exercising their art. Here one dexterous juggler threw three balls and three knives alternately in the air, catching them one by one as

they fell.[1] There, another was gravely leading a great bear to dance on its hind legs, while his coadjutor kept time with a sort of flute or flageolet. The lazy by-standers, in great concourse, stared and laughed; but the laugh was hushed at the tramp of the Norman steeds; and the famous Count by the King's side, as, with a smiling lip, but observant eye, he rode along, drew all attention from the bear.

On now approaching that bridge which, not many years before, had been the scene of terrible contest between the invading Danes and Ethelred's ally, Olave of Norway,[2] you might still see, though neglected and already in decay, the double fortifications that had wisely guarded that vista into the city. On both sides of the bridge, which was of wood, were forts, partly of timber, partly of stone, and breast-works, and by the forts a little chapel. The bridge, broad enough to admit two vehicles abreast,[3] was crowded with passengers, and lively with stalls and booths. Here was the favourite spot of the popular ballad-singer.[4] Here, too, might be seen the swarthy Saracen, with wares from Spain and Afric.[5] Here,

[1] STRUTT'S *Horda.*

[2] There is an animated description of this "Battle of London Bridge," which gave ample theme to the Scandinavian scalds, in Snorro Sturleson:

"London Bridge is broken down;
Gold is won and bright renown;
Shields resounding,
War-horns sounding,
Hildur shouting in the din,
Arrows singing,
Mail-coats ringing,
Odin makes our Olaf win."

LAING'S *Heimskringla,* vol. ii. p. 10.

[3] Sharon Turner.

[4] Hawkins, vol. ii. p. 94.

[5] Doomsday makes mention of the Moors, and the Germans (the Emperor's merchants) that were sojourners or settlers

the German merchant from the Steel-yard swept along on his way to his suburban home. Here, on some holy office, went quick the muffled monk. Here, the city gallant paused to laugh with the country girl, her basket full of May-boughs and cowslips. In short, all bespoke that activity, whether in business or pastime, which was destined to render that city the mart of the world, and which had already knit the trade of the Anglo-Saxon to the remoter corners of commercial Europe. The deep dark eye of William dwelt admiringly on the bustling groups, on the broad river, and the forest of masts which rose by the indented marge near Belin's gate.[1] And he to whom, whatever his faults, or rather crimes, to the unfortunate people he not only oppressed but deceived—London at least may yet be grateful, not only for chartered franchise,[2] but for advancing, in one short vigorous reign, her commerce and wealth, beyond what centuries of Anglo-Saxon domination, with its inherent feebleness, had effected, exclaimed aloud:

in London. The Saracens at that time were among the great merchants of the world; Marseilles, Arles, Avignon, Montpellier, Toulouse, were the wonted *etapes* of their active traders. What civilisers, what teachers they were—those same Saracens! How much in arms and in arts we owe them! Fathers of the Provençal poetry they, far more than even the Scandinavian scalds, have influenced the literature of Christian Europe. The most ancient chronicle of the Cid was written in Arabic, a little before the Cid's death, by two of his pages, who were Mussulmans. The medical science of the Moors for six centuries enlightened Europe, and their metaphysics were adopted in nearly all the Christian universities.

[1] Billingsgate. See Note (C), at the end of the volume.

[2] London received a charter from William at the instigation of the Norman Bishop of London; but it probably only confirmed the previous municipal constitution, since it says briefly, "I grant you all to be as law-worthy as ye were in the days of King Edward." The rapid increase, however, of the commercial prosperity and political importance of London after the Conquest, is attested in many chronicles, and becomes strikingly evident even on the surface of history.

"By rood and mass, O dear king, thy lot hath fallen on a goodly heritage."

"Hem!" said Edward, lazily; "thou knowest not how troublesome these Saxons are. And while thou speakest, lo, in yon shattered walls, built first, they say, by Alfred of holy memory, are the evidences of the Danes. Bethink thee how often they have sailed up this river. How know I but what the next year the raven flag may stream over these waters? Magnus of Denmark hath already claimed my crown as heir to the royalties of Canute, and" (here Edward hesitated), "Godwin and Harold, whom alone of my thegns Dane and Northman fear, are far away."

"Miss not them, Edward, my cousin," cried the Duke, in haste. "Send for me if danger threat thee. Ships enow await thy hest in my new port of Cherbourg. And I tell thee this for thy comfort, that were I king of the English, and lord of this river, the citizens of London might sleep from vespers to prime, without fear of the Dane. Never again should the raven flag be seen by this bridge! Never, I swear, by the Splendour Divine."

Not without purpose spoke William thus stoutly; and he turned on the King those glittering eyes (*micantes oculos*), which the chroniclers have praised and noted. For it was his hope and his aim in this visit, that his cousin Edward should formally promise him that goodly heritage of England. But the King made no rejoinder, and they now neared the end of the bridge.

"What old ruin looms yonder?"[1] asked William,

[1] There seems good reason for believing that a keep did stand where the Tower stands, before the Conquest, and that William's edifice spared some of its remains. In the very interesting letter from John Bayford relating to the city of Lon-

hiding his disappointment at Edward's silence; "it seemeth the remains of some stately keape, which, by its fashion, I should pronounce Roman."

"Ay!" said Edward, "and it is said to have been built by the Romans; and one of the old Lombard freemasons employed on my new palace of Westminster, giveth that, and some others in my domain, the name of the Juillet Tower."

"Those Romans were our masters in all things gallant and wise," said William; "and I predict that, some day or other, on that site, a King of England will re-erect palace and tower. And yon castle towards the west?"

"Is the Tower Palatine, where our predecessors have lodged, and ourself sometimes; but the sweet loneliness of Thorney Isle pleaseth me more now."

Thus talking, they entered London, a rude, dark city, built mainly of timbered houses; streets narrow and winding; windows rarely glazed, but protected chiefly by linen blinds; vistas opening, however, at times into broad spaces, round the various convents, where green trees grew up behind low palisades. Tall roods, and holy images, to which we owe the names of existing thoroughfares (Rood-lane and Lady-lane [1]), where the ways crossed, attracted the curious and detained the pious. Spires there were not then, but blunt, cone-headed turrets, pyramidal, denoting the Houses of God, rose often from the low, thatched,

don (*Lel. Collect.* lviii.), the writer, a thorough master of his subject, states that "the Romans made a public military way, that of Watling Street, from the Tower to Ludgate, in a straight line, at the end of which they built stations or citadels, one of which was where the White Tower now stands." Bayford adds that "when the White Tower was fitted up for the reception of records, there remained many Saxon inscriptions."

[1] Rude-lane. Lad-lane.—BAYFORD.

and reeded roofs. But every now and then, a scholar's, if not an ordinary, eye could behold the relics of Roman splendour, traces of that elder city which now lies buried under our thoroughfares, and of which, year by year, are dug up the stately skeletons.

Along the Thames still rose, though much mutilated, the wall of Constantine.[1] Round the humble and barbarous Church of St. Paul's (wherein lay the dust of Sebba, that king of the East Saxons who quitted his throne for the sake of Christ, and of Edward's feeble and luckless father, Ethelred) might be seen, still gigantic in decay, the ruins of the vast temple of Diana.[2] Many a church, and many a convent, pierced their mingled brick and timber work with Roman capital and shaft. Still by the tower, to which was afterwards given the Saracen name of Barbican, were the wrecks of the Roman station, where cohorts watched night and day, in case of fire within or foe without.[3]

In a niche, near the Aldersgate, stood the headless statue of Fortitude, which monks and pilgrims deemed some unknown saint in the old time, and halted to honour. And in the midst of Bishopsgate-street, sate on his desecrated throne a mangled Jupiter, his eagle at his feet. Many a half-converted Dane there lingered, and mistook the Thunderer and the bird for Odin and his hawk. By Leod-gate (the People's gate[4]) still too were seen the arches of one of those mighty aqueducts which the Roman learned from the Etrurian. And close by the Still-yard, occupied by "the Emperor's cheap men" (the German merchants), stood, almost entire, the Roman temple, extant in the

[1] Fitzstephen. [2] Camden.
[3] Bayford, *Leland's Collectanea*, p. lviii.
[4] Ludgate (Leod-gate).—Verstegan.

time of Geoffrey of Monmouth. Without the walls, the old Roman vineyards [1] still put forth their green leaves and crude clusters, in the plains of East Smithfield, in the fields of St. Giles's, and on the site where now stands Hatton Garden. Still massere [2] and cheapmen chaffered and bargained, at booth and stall, in Mart-lane, where the Romans had bartered before them. With every encroachment on new soil, within the walls and without, urn, vase, weapon, human bones, were shovelled out, and lay disregarded amidst heaps of rubbish.

Not on such evidences of the past civilisation looked the practical eye of the Norman Count; not on things, but on men, looked he; and as silently he rode on from street to street, out of those men, stalwart and tall, busy, active, toiling, the Man-Ruler saw the Civilisation that was to come.

So, gravely through the small city, and over the bridge that spanned the little river of the Fleet, rode the train along the Strand; to the left, smooth sands; to the right, fair pastures below green holts, thinly studded with houses; over numerous cuts and inlets running into the river, rode they on. The hour and the season were those in which youth enjoyed its holiday, and gay groups resorted to the then [3] fashionable haunts of the Fountain of Holywell, "streaming forth among glistening pebbles."

So they gained at length the village of Charing, which Edward had lately bestowed on his Abbey of Westminster, and which was now filled with workmen, native and foreign, employed on that edifice and

[1] See Note (D), at the end of the volume.
[2] *Massere*, merchant, mercer.
[3] Fitzstephen.

the contiguous palace. Here they loitered awhile at the Mews [1] (where the hawks were kept), passed by the rude palace of stone and rubble, appropriated to the tributary kings of Scotland [2]—a gift from Edgar to Kenneth—and finally, reaching the inlet of the river, which, winding round the Isle of Thorney (now Westminster), separated the rising church, abbey, and palace of the Saint-king from the main-land, dismounted—and were ferried across [3] the narrow stream to the broad space round the royal residence.

CHAPTER V

The new palace of Edward the Confessor, the palace of Westminster, opened its gates, to receive the Saxon King and the Norman Duke, remounting on the margin of the isle, and now riding side by side. And as the Duke glanced, from brows habitually knit, first over the pile, stately, though not yet completed, with its long rows of round arched windows, cased by indented fringes and frætwork (or tooth) work, its sweep of solid columns with circling cloisters, and its ponderous towers of simple grandeur; then over the groups of courtiers, with close vests, and short mantles, and beardless cheeks, that filled up the wide space, to gaze in homage on the renowned guest, his heart swelled within him, and, checking his rein, he drew near to his brother of Bayeux, and whispered,—

[1] *Meuse.* Apparently rather a hawk hospital, from *Muta* (Camden). Du Fresne, in his Glossary, says, *Muta* is in French *Le Meue,* and a disease to which the hawk was subject on changing its feathers.

[2] Scotland-yard.—STRYPE.

[3] The first bridge that connected Thorney Isle with the main-land is said to have been built by Matilda, wife of Henry I.

"Is not this already the court of the Norman? Behold yon nobles and earls, how they mimic our garb! behold the very stones in yon gate, how they range themselves, as if carved by the hand of the Norman mason! Verily and indeed, brother, the shadow of the rising sun rests already on these halls."

"Had England no people," said the bishop, "England were yours already. But saw you not, as we rode along, the lowering brows? and heard you not the angry murmurs? The villeins are many, and their hate is strong."

"Strong is the roan I bestride," said the Duke; "but a bold rider curbs it with the steel of the bit, and guides it with the goad of the heel."

And now, as they neared the gate, a band of minstrels in the pay of the Norman touched their instruments, and woke their song—the household song of the Norman—the battle hymn of Roland, the Paladin of Charles the Great. At the first word of the song, the Norman knights and youths profusely scattered amongst the Normanised Saxons caught up the lay, and with sparkling eyes, and choral voices, they welcomed the mighty Duke into the palace of the last meek successor of Woden.

By the porch of the inner court the Duke flung himself from his saddle, and held the stirrup for Edward to dismount. The King placed his hand gently on his guest's broad shoulder, and, having somewhat slowly reached the ground, embraced and kissed him in the sight of the gorgeous assemblage; then led him by the hand towards the fair chamber which was set apart for the Duke, and so left him to his attendants.

William, lost in thought, suffered himself to be disrobed in silence; but when Fitzosborne, his favourite

confidant and haughtiest baron, who yet deemed himself but honoured by personal attendance on his chief, conducted him towards the bath, which adjoined the chamber, he drew back, and wrapping round him more closely the gown of fur that had been thrown over his shoulders, he muttered low,—" Nay, if there be on me yet one speck of English dust, let it rest there!—seizin, Fitzosborne, seizin, of the English land." Then, waving his hand, he dismissed all his attendants except Fitzosborne, and Rolf, Earl of Hereford,[1] nephew to Edward, but French on the father's side, and thoroughly in the Duke's councils. Twice the Duke paced the chamber without vouchsafing a word to either, then paused by the round window that overlooked the Thames. The scene was fair; the sun, towards its decline, glittered on numerous small pleasure-boats, which shot to and fro between Westminster and London or towards the opposite shores of Lambeth. His eye sought eagerly, along the curves of the river, the grey remains of the fabled Tower of Julius, and the walls, gates, and turrets, that rose by the stream, or above the dense mass of silent roofs; then it strained hard to descry the tops of the more distant masts of the infant navy, fostered under Alfred, the far-seeing, for the future civilisation of wastes unknown, and the empire of seas untracked.

The Duke breathed hard, and opened and closed the hand which he stretched forth into space as if to grasp the city he beheld. " Rolf," said he, abruptly, " thou knowest, no doubt, the wealth of the London traders, one and all; for, *foi de Guillaume*, my *gentil chevalier*,

[1] We give him that title, which this Norman noble generally bears in the Chronicles, though Palgrave observes that he is rather to be styled Earl of the Magesetan (the Welch Marches).

thou art a true Norman, and scentest the smell of gold as a hound the boar!"

Rolf smiled, as if pleased with a compliment which simpler men might have deemed, at the best, equivocal, and replied:

"It is true, my liege; and gramercy, the air of England sharpens the scent; for in this villein and motley country, made up of all races,—Saxon and Fin, Dane and Fleming, Pict and Walloon,—it is not as with us, where the brave man and the pure descent are held chief in honour: here, gold and land are, in truth, name and lordship; even their popular name for their national assembly of the Witan is, 'The Wealthy.'[1] He who is but a ceorl to-day, let him be rich, and he may be earl to-morrow, marry in king's blood, and rule armies under a gonfanon statelier than a king's; while he whose fathers were ealdermen and princes, if, by force or by fraud, by waste or by largess, he become poor, falls at once into contempt, and out of his state,—sinks into a class they call 'six-hundred men,' in their barbarous tongue, and his children will probably sink still lower, into ceorls. Wherefore gold is the thing here most coveted; and by St. Michael, the sin is infectious."

William listened to the speech with close attention.

"Good," said he, rubbing slowly the palm of his right hand over the back of the left; "a land all compact with the power of one race, a race of conquering men, as our fathers were, whom nought but cowardice or treason can degrade,—such a land, O Rolf of Hereford, it were hard indeed to subjugate, or decoy, or tame—"

"So has my lord the Duke found the Bretons; and

[1] Eadigan.—S. TURNER, vol. i. p. 274.

so also do I find the Welch upon my marches of Hereford."

"But," continued William, not heeding the interruption, "where wealth is more than blood and race, chiefs may be bribed or menaced; and the multitude —by'r Lady, the multitude are the same in all lands, mighty under valiant and faithful leaders, powerless as sheep without them. But to my question, my gentle Rolf; this London must be rich?" [1]

"Rich enow," answered Rolf, "to coin into armed men, that should stretch from Rouen to Flanders on the one hand, and Paris on the other."

"In the veins of Matilda, whom thou wooest for wife," said Fitzosborne, abruptly, "flows the blood of Charlemagne. God grant his empire to the children she shall bear thee!"

The Duke bowed his head, and kissed a relic suspended from his throat. Farther sign of approval of his counsellor's words he gave not, but after a pause, he said:

"When I depart, Rolf, thou wendest back to thy marches. These Welch are brave and fierce, and shape work enow for thy hands."

"Ay, by my halidame! poor sleep by the side of the beehive you have stricken down."

"Marry, then," said William, "let the Welch prey on Saxon, Saxon on Welch; let neither win too easily. Remember our omens to-day, Welch hawk and Saxon bittern, and over their corpses, Duke William's Norway falcon! Now dress we for the complin [2] and the banquet."

[1] The comparative wealth of London was indeed considerable. When, in 1018, all the rest of England was taxed to an amount considered stupendous, viz., 71,000 Saxon pounds, London contributed 11,000 pounds besides.

[2] *Complin,* the second vespers.

BOOK II

LANFRANC THE SCHOLAR

CHAPTER I

Four meals a day, nor those sparing, were not deemed too extravagant an interpretation of the daily bread for which the Saxon prayed. Four meals a day, from earl to ceorl! "Happy times!" may sigh the descendant of the last, if he read these pages; partly so they were for the ceorl, but not in all things, for never sweet is the food, and never gladdening is the drink, of servitude. Inebriety, the vice of the warlike nations of the North, had not, perhaps, been the pre-eminent excess of the earlier Saxons, while yet the active and fiery Britons, and the subsequent petty wars between the kings of the Heptarchy, enforced on hardy warriors the safety of temperance; but the example of the Danes had been fatal. Those giants of the sea, like all who pass from great vicissitudes of toil and repose, from the tempest to the haven, snatched with full hands every pleasure in their reach. With much that tended permanently to elevate the character of the Saxon, they imparted much for a time to degrade it. The Anglian learned to feast to repletion, and drink to delirium. But such were not the vices of the court of the Confessor. Brought up from his youth in the cloister-camp of the Normans, what he loved in their manners was the abstemious sobriety,

and the ceremonial religion, which distinguished those sons of the Scandinavian from all other kindred tribes.

The Norman position in France, indeed, in much resembled that of the Spartan in Greece. He had forced a settlement with scanty numbers in the midst of a subjugated and sullen population, surrounded by jealous and formidable foes. Hence sobriety was a condition of his being, and the policy of the chief lent a willing ear to the lessons of the preacher. Like the Spartan, every Norman of pure race was free and noble; and this consciousness inspired not only that remarkable dignity of mien which Spartan and Norman alike possessed, but also that fastidious self-respect which would have revolted from exhibiting a spectacle of debasement to inferiors. And, lastly, as the paucity of their original numbers, the perils that beset, and the good fortune that attended them, served to render the Spartans the most religious of all the Greeks in their dependence on the Divine aid; so, perhaps, to the same causes may be traced the proverbial piety of the ceremonial Normans; they carried into their new creed something of feudal loyalty to their spiritual protectors; did homage to the Virgin for the lands that she vouchsafed to bestow, and recognised in St. Michael the chief who conducted their armies.

After hearing the complin vespers in the temporary chapel fitted up in that unfinished abbey of Westminster, which occupied the site of the temple of Apollo,[1] the King and his guests repaired to their evening meal

[1] CAMDEN—A church was built out of the ruins of that temple by Sibert, King of the East Saxons; and Canute favoured much the small monastery attached to it (originally established by Dunstan for twelve Benedictines), on account of its Abbot Wulnoth, whose society pleased him. The old palace of Canute, in Thorney Isle, had been destroyed by fire.

in the great hall of the palace. Below the dais were ranged three long tables for the knights in William's train, and that flower of the Saxon nobility who, fond, like all youth, of change and imitation, thronged the court of their Normanised saint, and scorned the rude patriotism of their fathers. But hearts truly English were not there. Yea, many of Godwin's noblest foes sighed for the English-hearted Earl, banished by Norman guile on behalf of English law.

At the oval table on the dais the guests were select and chosen. At the right hand of the King sat William; at the left Odo of Bayeux. Over these three stretched a canopy of cloth of gold; the chairs on which each sate were of metal, richly gilded over, and the arms carved in elaborate arabesques. At this table too was the King's nephew, the Earl of Hereford, and, in right of kinsmanship to the Duke, the Norman's beloved baron and grand seneschal, William Fitzosborne, who, though in Normandy even he sate not at the Duke's table, was, as related to his lord, invited by Edward to his own. No other guests were admitted to this board, so that, save Edward, all were Norman. The dishes were of gold and silver, the cups inlaid with jewels. Before each guest was a knife, with hilt adorned by precious stones, and a napkin fringed with silver. The meats were not placed on the table, but served upon small spits, and between every course a basin of perfumed water was borne round by high-born pages. No dame graced the festival; for she who should have presided—she, matchless for beauty without pride, piety without asceticism, and learning without pedantry—she, the pale rose of England, loved daughter of Godwin, and loathed wife of Edward, had shared in the fall of her kindred, and had been sent

by the meek King, or his fierce counsellors, to an abbey in Hampshire, with the taunt "that it was not meet that the child and sister should enjoy state and pomp, while the sire and brethren ate the bread of the stranger in banishment and disgrace."

But, hungry as were the guests, it was not the custom of that holy court to fall to without due religious ceremonial. The rage for psalm-singing was then at its height in England; psalmody had excluded almost every other description of vocal music; and it is even said that great festivals on certain occasions were preluded by no less an effort of lungs and memory than the entire songs bequeathed to us by King David! This day, however, Hugoline, Edward's Norman chamberlain, had been pleased to abridge the length of the prolix grace, and the company were let off, to Edward's surprise and displeasure, with the curt and unseemly preparation of only nine psalms and one special hymn in honour of some obscure saint to whom the day was dedicated. This performed, the guests resumed their seats, Edward murmuring an apology to William for the strange omission of his chamberlain, and saying thrice to himself, "Naught, naught—very naught."

The mirth languished at the royal table, despite some gay efforts from Rolf, and some hollow attempts at light-hearted cheerfulness from the great Duke, whose eyes, wandering down the table, were endeavouring to distinguish Saxon from Norman, and count how many of the first might already be reckoned in the train of his friends. But at the long tables below, as the feast thickened, and ale, mead, pigment, morat, and wine circled round, the tongue of the Saxon was loosed, and the Norman knight lost somewhat of his

superb gravity. It was just as what a Danish poet called the "sun of the night," (in other words, the fierce warmth of the wine,) had attained its meridian glow, that some slight disturbance at the doors of the hall, without which waited a dense crowd of the poor on whom the fragments of the feast were afterwards to be bestowed, was followed by the entrance of two strangers, for whom the officers appointed to marshal the entertainment made room at the foot of one of the tables. Both these new-comers were clad with extreme plainness; one in a dress, though not quite monastic, that of an ecclesiastic of low degree; the other in a long grey mantle and loose gonna, the train of which last was tucked into a broad leathern belt, leaving bare the leggings, which showed limbs of great bulk and sinew, and which were stained by the dust and mire of travel. The first mentioned was slight and small of person; the last was of the height and port of the sons of Anak. The countenance of neither could be perceived, for both had let fall the hood, worn by civilians as by priests out of doors, more than half way over their faces.

A murmur of great surprise, disdain, and resentment, at the intrusion of strangers so attired circulated round the neighbourhood in which they had been placed, checked for a moment by a certain air of respect which the officer had shown towards both, but especially the taller; but breaking out with greater vivacity from the faint restraint, as the tall man unceremoniously stretched across the board, drew towards himself an immense flagon, which (agreeably to the custom of arranging the feast in "messes" of four) had been specially appropriated to Ulf the Dane, Godrith the Saxon, and two young Norman knights akin

to the puissant Lord of Grantmesnil,—and having offered it to his comrade, who shook his head, drained it with a gusto that seemed to bespeak him at least no Norman, and wiped his lips boorishly with the sleeve of his huge arm.

"Dainty sir," said one of those Norman knights, William Mallet, of the house of Mallet de Graville,[1] as he moved as far from the gigantic intruder as the space on the settle would permit, "forgive the observation that you have damaged my mantle, you have grazed my foot, and you have drunk my wine. And vouchsafe, if it so please you, the face of the man who hath done this triple wrong to William Mallet de Graville."

A kind of laugh—for laugh absolute it was not—rattled under the cowl of the tall stranger, as he drew it still closer over his face, with a hand that might have spanned the breast of his interrogator, and he made a gesture as if he did not understand the question addressed to him.

Therewith the Norman knight, bending with demure courtesy across the board to Godrith the Saxon, said:

"*Pardex*,[2] but this fair guest and seigneur seemeth to me, noble Godree (whose name I fear my lips do but rudely enounce) of Saxon line and language; our Romance tongue he knoweth not. Pray you, is it the Saxon custom to enter a king's hall so garbed, and drink a knight's wine so mutely?"

Godrith, a young Saxon of considerable rank, but one of the most sedulous of the imitators of the for-

[1] See note to PLUQUET'S *Roman de Rou*, p. 285.
N.B.—Whenever the *Roman de Rou* is quoted in these pages it is from the excellent edition of M. Pluquet.

[2] *Pardex* or *Pardé*, corresponding to the modern French expletive, *pardie*.

eign fashions, coloured high at the irony in the knight's speech, and turning rudely to the huge guest, who was now causing immense fragments of pasty to vanish under the cavernous cowl, he said in his native tongue, though with a lisp as if unfamiliar to him—

"If thou beest Saxon, shame us not with thy ceorlish manners; crave pardon of this Norman thegn, who will doubtless yield it to thee in pity. Uncover thy face—and—"

Here the Saxon's rebuke was interrupted; for one of the servitors just then approaching Godrith's side with a spit, elegantly caparisoned with some score of plump larks, the unmannerly giant stretched out his arm within an inch of the Saxon's startled nose, and possessed himself of larks, broche, and all. He drew off two, which he placed on his friend's platter, despite all dissuasive gesticulations, and deposited the rest upon his own. The young banqueters gazed upon the spectacle in wrath too full for words.

At last spoke Mallet de Graville, with an envious eye upon the larks—for though a Norman was not gluttonous, he was epicurean—"Certes, and *foi de chevalier!* a man must go into strange parts if he wish to see monsters; but we are fortunate people," (and he turned to his Norman friend, Aymer, Quen[1] or Count, D'Evreux,) "that we have discovered Polyphemus without going so far as Ulysses;" and pointing to the hooded giant, he quoted, appropriately enough,

"Monstrum, horrendum, informe, ingens, cui lumen ademptum."

[1] *Quen,* or rather *Quens;* synonymous with *Count* in the Norman Chronicles. Earl Godwin is strangely styled by Wace, *Quens Gwine.*

The giant continued to devour his larks, as complacently as the ogre to whom he was likened might have devoured the Greeks in his cave. But his fellow intruder seemed agitated by the sound of the Latin; he lifted up his head suddenly, and showed lips glistening with white even teeth, and curved into an approving smile, while he said: "*Bene, my fili! bene, lepidissime, poetæ verba, in militis ore, non indecora sonant.*" [1]

The young Norman stared at the speaker, and replied, in the same tone of grave affectation: "Courteous sir! the approbation of an ecclesiastic so eminent as I take you to be, from the modesty with which you conceal your greatness, cannot fail to draw upon me the envy of my English friends; who are accustomed to swear *in verba magistri*, only for *verba* they learnedly substitute *vina*."

"You are pleasant, Sire Mallet," said Godrith, reddening; "but I know well that Latin is only fit for monks and shavelings; and little enow even *they* have to boast of."

The Norman's lip curled in disdain. "Latin!—O, Godree, *bien aimé!*—Latin is the tongue of Cæsars and senators, *fortes* conquerors and *preux* chevaliers. Knowest thou not that Duke William the dauntless at eight years old had the comments of Julius Cæsar by heart?—and that it is his saying, that 'a king without letters is a crowned ass?' [2] When the king is an ass, asinine are his subjects. Wherefore go to school, speak respectfully of thy betters, the monks and shavelings, who with us are often brave captains and sage

[1] "Good, good, pleasant son,—the words of the poet sound gracefully on the lips of the knight."

[2] A sentiment variously assigned to William and to his son Henry the Beau Clerc.

councillors,—and learn that a full head makes a weighty hand."

"Thy name, young knight?" said the ecclesiastic, in Norman French, though with a slight foreign accent.

"I can give it thee," said the giant, speaking aloud for the first time, in the same language, and in a rough voice, which a quick ear might have detected as disguised,—"I can describe to thee name, birth, and quality. By name, this youth is Guillaume Mallet, sometimes styled De Graville, because our Norman gentilhommes, forsooth, must always now have a 'de' tacked to their names; nevertheless he hath no other right to the seigneurie of Graville, which appertains to the head of his house, than may be conferred by an old tower on one corner of the demesnes so designated, with lands that would feed one horse and two villeins—if they were not in pawn to a Jew for moneys to buy velvet mantelines and a chain of gold. By birth, he comes from Mallet,[1] a bold Norwegian in the fleet of Rou the Sea-king; his mother was a Frank woman, from whom he inherits his best possessions—videlicet, a shrewd wit, and a railing tongue. His qualities are abstinence, for he eateth nowhere save at the cost of another—some Latin, for he was meant for a monk, because he seemed too slight of frame for a warrior—some courage, for in spite of his frame he slew three Burgundians with his own hand; and Duke William, among their foolish acts, spoilt a friar *sans tache*, by making a knight *sans terre;* and for the rest—"

"And for the rest," interrupted the Sire de Graville, turning white with wrath, but speaking in a low repressed voice, "were it not that Duke William sate

[1] Mallet is a genuine Scandinavian name to this day.

yonder, thou shouldst have six inches of cold steel in thy huge carcase to digest thy stolen dinner, and silence thy unmannerly tongue.—"

"For the rest," continued the giant indifferently, and as if he had not heard the interruption; "for the rest, he only resembles Achilles, in being *impiger iracundus*. Big men can quote Latin as well as little ones, Messire Mallet the *beau clerc!*"

Mallet's hand was on his dagger; and his eye dilated like that of the panther before he springs; but fortunately, at that moment, the deep sonorous voice of William, accustomed to send its sounds down the ranks of an army, rolled clear through the assemblage, though pitched little above its ordinary key:—

"Fair is your feast, and bright your wine, Sir King and brother mine! But I miss here what king and knight hold as the salt of the feast and the perfume to the wine: the lay of the minstrel. Beshrew me, but both Saxon and Norman are of kindred stock, and love to hear in hall and bower the deeds of their northern fathers. Crave I therefore from your gleemen, or harpers, some song of the olden time!"

A murmur of applause went through the Norman part of the assembly; the Saxons looked up; and some of the more practised courtiers sighed wearily, for they knew well what ditties alone were in favour with the saintly Edward.

The low voice of the King in reply was not heard, but those habituated to read his countenance in its very faint varieties of expression, might have seen that it conveyed reproof; and its purport soon became practically known, when a lugubrious prelude was heard from a quarter of the hall, in which sate certain ghost-like musicians in white robes—white as

winding-sheets; and forthwith a dolorous and dirgelike voice chanted a long and most tedious recital of the miracles and martyrdom of some early saint. So monotonous was the chant, that its effect soon became visible in a general drowsiness. And when Edward, who alone listened with attentive delight, turned towards the close to gather sympathising admiration from his distinguished guests, he saw his nephew yawning as if his jaw were dislocated—the Bishop of Bayeux, with his well-ringed fingers interlaced and resting on his stomach, fast asleep—Fitzosborne's half-shaven head balancing to and fro with many an uneasy start—and, William, wide awake indeed, but with eyes fixed on vacant space, and his soul far away from the gridiron to which (all other saints be praised!) the saint of the ballad had at last happily arrived.

"A comforting and salutary recital, Count William," said the King.

The Duke started from his reverie, and bowed his head: then said, rather abruptly, "Is not yon blazon that of King Alfred?"

"Yea. Wherefore?"

"Hem! Matilda of Flanders is in direct descent from Alfred: it is a name and a line the Saxons yet honour!"

"Surely, yes; Alfred was a great man, and reformed the Psalmster," replied Edward.

The dirge ceased, but so benumbing had been its effect, that the torpor it created did not subside with the cause. There was a dead and funereal silence throughout the spacious hall, when suddenly, loudly, mightily, as the blast of the trumpet upon the hush of the grave, rose a single voice. All started—all turned—all looked to one direction; and they saw that the

great voice pealed from the farthest end of the hall. From under his gown the gigantic stranger had drawn a small three-stringed instrument—somewhat resembling the modern lute—and thus he sang,—

THE BALLAD OF ROU[1]

I.

From Blois to Senlis, wave by wave, roll'd on the Norman flood,
And Frank on Frank went drifting down the weltering tide of blood;
There was not left in all the land a castle wall to fire,
And not a wife but wailed a lord, a child but mourned a sire.
To Charles the king, the mitred monks, the mailèd barons flew,
While, shaking earth, behind them strode the thunder march of Rou.

II.

"O King," then cried those barons bold, "in vain are mace and mail,
We fall before the Norman axe, as corn before the hail."
"And vainly," cried the pious monks, "by Mary's shrine we kneel,
For prayers, like arrows, glance aside, against the Norman steel."
The barons groaned, the shavelings wept, while near and nearer drew,
As death-birds round their scented feast, the raven flags of Rou.

III.

Then said King Charles, "Where thousands fail, what king can stand alone,
The strength of kings is in the men that gather round the throne.
When war dismays my barons bold, 'tis time for war to cease;
When Heaven forsakes my pious monks, the will of Heaven is peace.

[1] Rou—the name given by the French to Rollo, or Rolfganger, the founder of the Norman settlement.

Go forth, my monks, with mass and rood the Norman camp unto,
And to the fold, with shepherd crook, entice this grisly Rou.

IV.

" I'll give him all the ocean coast, from Michael Mount to Eure,
And Gille, my child, shall be his bride, to bind him fast and sure:
Let him but kiss the Christian cross, and sheathe the heathen sword,
And hold the lands I cannot keep, a fief from Charles his lord."
Forth went the pastors of the Church, the Shepherd's work to do,
And wrap the golden fleece around the tiger loins of Rou:

V.

Psalm-chanting came the shaven monks, within the camp of dread;
Amidst his warriors, Norman Rou stood taller by the head.
Out spoke the Frank Archbishop then, a priest devout and sage,
" When peace and plenty wait thy word, what need of war and rage?
Why waste a land as fair as aught beneath the arch of blue,
Which might be thine to sow and reap?—Thus saith the King to Rou:

VI.

" ' I'll give thee all the ocean coast, from Michael Mount to Eure,
And Gille, my fairest child, as bride, to bind thee fast and sure;
If thou but kneel to Christ our God, and sheathe thy paynim sword,
And hold thy land, the Church's son, a fief from Charles thy lord.' "
The Norman on his warriors looked—to counsel they withdrew;
The saints took pity on the Franks, and moved the soul of Rou.

VII.

So back he strode and thus he spoke, to that Archbishop meek:
" I take the land thy king bestows from Eure to Michael-peak,

I take the maid, or foul or fair, a bargain with the toast,
And for thy creed, a sea-king's gods are those that give the most.
So hie thee back, and tell thy chief to make his proffer true,
And he shall find a docile son, and ye a saint in Rou."

VIII.

So o'er the border stream of Epte came Rou the Norman, where,
Begirt with barons, sat the King, enthroned at green St. Clair;
He placed his hand in Charles's hand,—loud shouted all the throng,
But tears were in King Charles's eyes—the grip of Rou was strong.
"Now kiss the foot," the Bishop said, "that homage still is due;"
Then dark the frown and stern the smile of that grim convert, Rou.

IX.

He takes the foot, as if the foot to slavish lips to bring;
The Normans scowl; he tilts the throne, and backwards falls the King.
Loud laugh the joyous Norman men—pale stare the Franks aghast;
And Rou lifts up his head as from the wind springs up the mast;
"I said I would adore a God, but not a mortal too;
The foot that fled before a foe let cowards kiss!" said Rou.

No words can express the excitement which this rough minstrelsy—marred as it is by our poor translation from the Romance-tongue in which it was chanted—produced amongst the Norman guests; less perhaps, indeed, the song itself, than the recognition of the minstrel; and as he closed, from more than a hundred voices came the loud murmur, only subdued from a shout by the royal presence, "Taillefer, our Norman Taillefer!"

"By our joint saint, Peter, my cousin the King," exclaimed William, after a frank cordial laugh; "Well I wot, no tongue less free than my warrior minstrel's could have so shocked our ears. Excuse his bold theme, for the sake of his bold heart, I pray thee; and since I know well" (here the Duke's face grew grave and anxious) "that nought save urgent and weighty news from my stormy realm could have brought over this rhyming petrel, permit the officer behind me to lead hither a bird, I fear, of omen as well as of song."

"Whatever pleases thee, pleases me," said Edward, drily; and he gave the order to the attendant. In a few moments, up the space in the hall, between either table, came the large stride of the famous minstrel, preceded by the officer and followed by the ecclesiastic. The hoods of both were now thrown back, and discovered countenances in strange contrast, but each equally worthy of the attention it provoked. The face of the minstrel was open and sunny as the day; and that of the priest, dark and close as night. Thick curls of deep auburn (the most common colour for the locks of the Norman) wreathed in careless disorder round Taillefer's massive unwrinkled brow. His eye, of light hazel, was bold and joyous; mirth, though sarcastic and sly, mantled round his lips. His whole presence was at once engaging and heroic.

On the other hand, the priest's cheek was dark and sallow; his features singularly delicate and refined; his forehead high, but somewhat narrow, and crossed with lines of thought; his mien composed, modest, but not without calm self-confidence. Amongst that assembly of soldiers, noiseless, self-collected, and conscious of his surpassing power over swords and mail, moved the SCHOLAR.

William's keen eye rested on the priest with some surprise, not unmixed with pride and ire; but first addressing Taillefer, who now gained the foot of the dais, he said, with a familiarity almost fond:

"Now, by're Lady, if thou bringest not ill news, thy gay face, man, is pleasanter to mine eyes than thy rough song to my ears. Kneel, Taillefer, kneel to King Edward, and with more address, rogue, than our unlucky countryman to King Charles."

But Edward, as ill-liking the form of the giant as the subject of his lay, said, pushing back his seat as far as he could:

"Nay, nay, we excuse thee, we excuse thee, tall man." Nevertheless, the minstrel still knelt, and so, with a look of profound humility, did the priest. Then both slowly rose, and at a sign from the Duke, passed to the other side of the table, standing behind Fitzosborne's chair.

"Clerk," said William, eyeing deliberately the sallow face of the ecclesiastic; "I know thee of old; and if the Church have sent me an envoy, *per la resplendar Dé*, it should have sent me at least an abbot."

"*Hein, hein!*" said Taillefer, bluntly, "vex not my *bon camarade*, Count of the Normans. Gramercy, thou wilt welcome him, peradventure, better than me; for the singer tells but of discord, and the sage may restore the harmony."

"Ha!" said the Duke, and the frown fell so dark over his eyes that the last seemed only visible by two sparks of fire. "I guess, my proud Vavasours are mutinous. Retire, thou and thy comrade. Await me in my chamber. The feast shall not flag in London because the wind blows a gale in Rouen."

The two envoys, since so they seemed, bowed in silence and withdrew.

"Nought of ill-tidings, I trust," said Edward, who had not listened to the whispered communications that had passed between the Duke and his subjects. "No schism in thy Church? The clerk seemed a peaceful man, and a humble."

"An there were schism in my Church," said the fiery Duke, "my brother of Bayeux would settle it by arguments as close as the gap between cord and throttle."

"Ah! thou art, doubtless, well read in the canons, holy Odo!" said the King, turning to the bishop with more respect than he had yet evinced towards that gentle prelate.

"Canons, yes, Seigneur, I draw them up myself for my flock conformably with such interpretations of the Roman Church as suit best with the Norman realm: and woe to deacon, monk, or abbot, who chooses to misconstrue them." [1]

The bishop looked so truculent and menacing, while his fancy thus conjured up the possibility of heretical dissent, that Edward shrank from him as he had done from Taillefer; and in a few minutes after, on exchange of signals between himself and the Duke, who, impatient to escape, was too stately to testify that desire, the retirement of the royal party broke up the banquet; save, indeed, that a few of the elder Saxons, and more incorrigible Danes, still steadily kept their seats, and were finally dislodged from their later settlements on the stone floors, to find themselves, at dawn, care-

[1] Pious severity to the heterodox was a Norman virtue. William of Poictiers says of William, "One knows with what zeal he pursued and exterminated those who thought differently;" *i.e.*, on transubstantiation. But the wise Norman, while flattering the tastes of the Roman Pontiff in such matters, took special care to preserve the independence of his Church from any undue dictation.

fully propped in a row against the outer walls of the palace, with their patient attendants, holding links, and gazing on their masters with stolid envy, if not of the repose at least of the drugs that had caused it.

CHAPTER II

"And now," said William, reclining on a long and narrow couch, with raised carved work all round it like a box (the approved fashion of a bed in those days), "now, Sire Taillefer—thy news."

There were then in the Duke's chamber, the Count Fitzosborne, Lord of Breteuil, surnamed "the Proud Spirit"—who, with great dignity, was holding before the brazier the ample tunic of linen (called *dormitorium* in the Latin of that time, and night-rail in the Saxon tongue) in which his lord was to robe his formidable limbs for repose,[1]—Taillefer, who stood erect before the Duke as a Roman sentry at his post,—and the ecclesiastic, a little apart, with arms gathered under his gown, and his bright dark eyes fixed on the ground.

"High and puissant, my liege," then said Taillefer, gravely, and with a shade of sympathy on his large face, "my news is such as is best told briefly: Bunaz, Count d'Eu and descendant of Richard Sanspeur, hath raised the standard of revolt."

"Go on," said the Duke, clenching his hand.

"Henry, King of the French, is treating with the

[1] A few generations later this comfortable and decent fashion of night-gear was abandoned; and our forefathers, Saxon and Norman, went to bed *in puris naturalibus,* like the Laplanders.

rebel, and stirring up mutiny in thy realm, and pretenders to thy throne."

"Ha!" said the Duke, and his lip quivered; "this is not all."

"No, my liege! and the worst is to come. Thy uncle Mauger, knowing that thy heart is bent on thy speedy nuptials with the high and noble damsel, Matilda of Flanders, has broken out again in thine absence—is preaching against thee in hall and from pulpit. He declares that such espousals are incestuous, both as within the forbidden degrees, and inasmuch as Adele, the lady's mother, was betrothed to thine uncle Richard; and Mauger menaces excommunication if my liege pursues his suit![1] So troubled is the realm, that I, waiting not for debate in council, and fearing sinister ambassage if I did so, took ship from thy port of Cherbourg, and have not flagged rein, and scarce broken bread, till I could say to the heir of Rolf the Founder—Save thy realm from the men of mail, and thy bride from the knaves in serge."

"Ho, ho!" cried William; then bursting forth in full wrath, as he sprang from the couch. "Hearest thou this, Lord Seneschal? Seven years, the probation of the patriarch, have I wooed and waited; and lo, in the seventh, does a proud priest say to me, 'Wrench the love from thy heart-strings!'—Excom-

[1] Most of the chroniclers merely state the parentage within the forbidden degrees as the obstacle to William's marriage with Matilda; but the betrothal or rather nuptials of her mother Adele with Richard III. (though never consummated), appears to have been the true canonical objection.—See note to Wace, p. 27. Nevertheless, Matilda's mother, Adele, stood in the relation of aunt to William, as widow of his father's elder brother, "an affinity," as is observed by a writer in the "Archæologia," "quite near enough to account for, if not to justify, the interference of the Church."—*Arch.* vol. xxxii. p. 109.

municate *me*—ME—William, the son of Robert the Devil! Ha, by God's splendour, Mauger shall live to wish the father stood, in the foul fiend's true likeness, by his side, rather than brave the bent brow of the son!"

"Dread my lord," said Fitzosborne, desisting from his employ, and rising to his feet; "thou knowest that I am thy true friend and leal knight; thou knowest how I have aided thee in this marriage with the lady of Flanders, and how gravely I think that what pleases thy fancy will guard thy realm; but rather than brave the order of the Church, and the ban of the Pope, I would see thee wed to the poorest virgin in Normandy."

William, who had been pacing the room like an enraged lion in his den, halted in amaze at this bold speech.

"This from thee, William Fitzosborne!—from thee! I tell thee, that if all the priests in Christendom, and all the barons in France, stood between me and my bride, I would hew my way through the midst. Foes invade my realm—let them; princes conspire against me—I smile in scorn; subjects mutiny—this strong hand can punish, or this large heart can forgive. All these are the dangers which he who governs men should prepare to meet; but man has a right to his love, as the stag to his hind. And he who wrongs me here, is foe and traitor to me, not as Norman Duke but as human being. Look to it—thou and thy proud barons, look to it!"

"Proud may thy barons be," said Fitzosborne, reddening, and with a brow that quailed not before his lord's; "for they are the sons of those who carved out the realm of the Norman, and owned in Rou but the

feudal chief of free warriors; vassals are not villeins. And that which we hold our duty—whether to Church or chief—that, Duke William, thy proud barons will doubtless do; nor less, believe me, for threats which, braved in discharge of duty and defence of freedom, we hold as air."

The Duke gazed on his haughty subject with an eye in which a meaner spirit might have seen its doom. The veins in his broad temples swelled like cords, and a light foam gathered round his quivering lips. But fiery and fearless as William was, not less was he sagacious and profound. In that one man he saw the representative of that superb and matchless chivalry—that race of races—those men of men, in whom the brave acknowledge the highest example of valiant deeds, and the free the manliest assertion of noble thoughts,[1] since the day when the last Athenian covered his head with his mantle, and mutely died: and far from being the most stubborn against his will, it was to Fitzosborne's paramount influence with the council, that he had often owed their submission to his wishes, and their contributions to his wars. In the very tempest of his wrath, he felt that the blow

[1] It might be easy to show, were this the place, that though the Saxons never lost their love of liberty, yet that the victories which gradually regained the liberty from the gripe of the Anglo-Norman kings, were achieved by the Anglo-Norman aristocracy. And even to this day, the few rare descendants of that race (whatever their political faction), will generally exhibit that impatience of despotic influence, and that disdain of corruption, which characterise the homely bonders of Norway, in whom we may still recognise the sturdy likeness of their fathers; while it is also remarkable that the modern inhabitants of those portions of the kingdom originally peopled by their kindred Danes, are, irrespective of mere party divisions, noted for their intolerance of all oppression, and their resolute independence of character; to wit, Yorkshire, Norfolk, Cumberland, and large districts in the Scottish Lowlands.

he longed to strike on that bold head would shiver his ducal throne to the dust. He felt, too, that awful indeed was that power of the Church which could thus turn against him the heart of his truest knight: and he began (for with all his outward frankness his temper was suspicious) to wrong the great-souled noble by the thought that he might already be won over by the enemies whom Mauger had arrayed against his nuptials. Therefore, with one of those rare and mighty efforts of that dissimulation which debased his character, but achieved his fortunes, he cleared his brow of its dark cloud, and said in a low voice, that was not without its pathos:

"Had an angel from heaven forewarned me that William Fitzosborne would speak thus to his kinsman and brother in arms, in the hour of need and the agony of passion, I would have disbelieved him. Let it pass——"

But ere the last word was out of his lips, Fitzosborne had fallen on his knees before the Duke, and, clasping his hand, exclaimed, while the tears rolled down his swarthy cheek, "Pardon, pardon, my liege! when thou speakest thus my heart melts. What thou willest, that will I! Church or Pope, no matter. Send me to Flanders; I will bring back thy bride."

The slight smile that curved William's lip, showed that he was scarce worthy of that sublime weakness in his friend. But he cordially pressed the hand that grasped his own, and said, "Rise; thus should brother speak to brother." Then—for his wrath was only concealed, not stifled, and yearned for its vent—his eye fell upon the delicate and thoughtful face of the priest, who had watched this short and stormy conference in profound silence, despite Taillefer's whispers to him

to interrupt the dispute. "So, priest," he said, "I remember me that when Mauger before let loose his rebellious tongue thou didst lend thy pedant learning to eke out his brainless treason. Methought that I then banished thee my realm?"

"Not so, Count and Seigneur," answered the ecclesiastic, with a grave but arch smile on his lip; "let me remind thee, that to speed me back to my native land thou didst graciously send me a horse, halting on three legs, and all lame on the fourth. Thus mounted, I met thee on my road. I saluted thee; so did the beast, for his head well nigh touched the ground. Whereon I did ask thee, in a Latin play of words, to give me at least a quadruped, not a tripod, for my journey.[1] Gracious, even in ire, and with relenting laugh, was thine answer. My liege, thy words implied banishment—thy laughter pardon. So I stayed."

Despite his wrath, William could scarce repress a smile; but recollecting himself, he replied, more gravely, "Peace with this levity, priest. Doubtless thou art the envoy from this scrupulous Mauger, or some other of my gentle clergy; and thou comest, as doubtless, with soft words and whining homilies. It is in vain. I hold the Church in holy reverence; the pontiff knows it. But Matilda of Flanders I have wooed; and Matilda of Flanders shall sit by my side in the halls of Rouen, or on the deck of my war-ship, till it anchors on a land worthy to yield a new domain to the son of the Sea-king."

"In the halls of Rouen—and it may be on the throne of England—shall Matilda reign by the side of Will-

[1] *Ex pervetusto codice, MS. Chron. Bec. in Vit. Lanfranc,* quoted in the "Archæologia," vol. xxxii. p. 109. The joke, which is very poor, seems to have turned upon *pede* and *quadrupede;* it is a little altered in the text.

iam," said the priest in a clear, low, and emphatic voice; "and it was to tell my lord the Duke that I repent me of my first unconsidered obeisance to Mauger as my spiritual superior; that since then I have myself examined canon and precedent; and though the letter of the law be against thy spousals, it comes precisely under the category of those alliances to which the fathers of the Church accord dispensation:—it is to tell thee this, that I, plain Doctor of Laws and priest of Pavia, have crossed the seas."

"Ha Rou!—Ha Rou!" cried Taillefer, with his usual bluffness, and laughing with great glee, "why wouldst thou not listen to me, monseigneur?"

"If thou deceivest me not," said William, in surprise, "and thou canst make good thy words, no prelate in Neustria, save Odo of Bayeux, shall lift his head high as thine." And here William, deeply versed in the science of men, bent his eyes keenly upon the unchanging and earnest face of the speaker. "Ah," he burst out, as if satisfied with the survey, "and my mind tells me that thou speakest not thus boldly and calmly without ground sufficient. Man, I like thee. Thy name? I forget it."

"Lanfranc of Pavia, please you my lord; called sometimes 'Lanfranc the Scholar' in thy cloister of Bec. Nor misdeem me, that I, humble, unmitred priest, should be thus bold. In birth I am noble, and my kindred stand near to the grace of our ghostly pontiff; to the pontiff I myself am not unknown. Did I desire honours, in Italy I might seek them; it is not so. I crave no guerdon for the service I proffer; none but this—leisure and books in the Convent of Bec."

"Sit down—nay, sit, man," said William, greatly interested, but still suspicious. "One riddle only I ask

thee to solve, before I give thee all my trust, and place my very heart in thy hands. Why, if thou desirest not rewards, shouldst thou thus care to serve me—thou, a foreigner?"

A light, brilliant and calm, shone in the eyes of the scholar, and a blush spread over his pale cheeks.

"My Lord Prince, I will answer in plain words. But first permit *me* to be the questioner."

The priest turned towards Fitzosborne, who had seated himself on a stool at William's feet, and, leaning his chin on his hand, listened to the ecclesiastic, not more with devotion to his calling, than wonder at the influence one so obscure was irresistibly gaining over his own martial spirit, and William's iron craft.

"Lovest thou not, William Lord of Breteuil, lovest thou not fame for the sake of fame?"

"*Sur mon âme*—yes!" said the Baron.

"And thou, Taillefer the minstrel, lovest thou not song for the sake of song?"

"For song alone," replied the mighty minstrel. "More gold in one ringing rhyme than in all the coffers of Christendom."

"And marvellest thou, reader of men's hearts," said the scholar, turning once more to William, "that the student loves knowledge for the sake of knowledge? Born of high race, poor in purse, and slight of thews, betimes I found wealth in books, and drew strength from lore. I heard of the Count of Rouen and the Normans, as a prince of small domain, with a measureless spirit, a lover of letters, and a captain in war. I came to thy duchy, I noted its subjects and its prince, and the words of Themistocles rang in my ear: 'I cannot play the lute, but I can make a small state great.' I felt an interest in thy strenuous and troubled career.

I believe that knowledge, to spread amongst the nations, must first find a nursery in the brain of kings; and I saw in the deed-doer, the agent of the thinker. In those espousals, on which with untiring obstinacy thy heart is set, I might sympathise with thee; perchance" —(here a melancholy smile flitted over the student's pale lips), "perchance even as a lover: priest though I be now, and dead to human love, once I loved, and I know what it is to strive in hope, and to waste in despair. But my sympathy, I own, was more given to the prince than to the lover. It was natural that I, priest and foreigner, should obey at first the orders of Mauger, archprelate and spiritual chief, and the more so as the law was with him; but when I resolved to stay despite thy sentence which banished me, I resolved to aid thee; for if with Mauger was the dead law, with thee was the living cause of man. Duke William, on thy nuptials with Matilda of Flanders rests thy duchy—rest, perchance, the mightier sceptres that are yet to come. Thy title disputed, thy principality new and unestablished, thou, above all men, must link thy new race with the ancient line of kings and kaisars. Matilda is the descendant of Charlemagne and Alfred. Thy realm is insecure as long as France undermines it with plots, and threatens it with arms. Marry the daughter of Baldwin—and thy wife is the niece of Henry of France—thine enemy becomes thy kinsman, and must, perforce, be thine ally. This is not all; it were strange, looking round this disordered royalty of England—a childless king, who loves thee better than his own blood; a divided nobility, already adopting the fashions of the stranger, and accustomed to shift their faith from Saxon to Dane, and Dane to Saxon; a people that has respect indeed for brave

chiefs, but, seeing new men rise daily from new houses, has no reverence for ancient lines and hereditary names; with a vast mass of villeins or slaves that have no interest in the land or its rulers; strange, seeing all this, if thy day-dreams have not also beheld a Norman sovereign on the throne of Saxon England. And thy marriage with the descendant of the best and most beloved prince that ever ruled these realms, if it does not give thee a title to the land, may help to conciliate its affections, and to fix thy posterity in the halls of their mother's kin. Have I said eno' to prove why, for the sake of nations, it were wise for the pontiff to stretch the harsh girths of the law? why I might be enabled to prove to the Court of Rome the policy of conciliating the love, and strengthening the hands, of the Norman Count, who may so become the main prop of Christendom? Yea, have I said eno' to prove that the humble clerk can look on mundane matters with the eye of a man who can make small states great?"

William remained speechless—his hot blood thrilled with a half superstitious awe; so thoroughly had this obscure Lombard divined, detailed all the intricate meshes of that policy with which he himself had interwoven his pertinacious affection for the Flemish princess, that it seemed to him as if he listened to the echo of his own heart, or heard from a soothsayer the voice of his most secret thoughts.

The priest continued:

"Wherefore, thus considering, I said to myself, Now has the time come, Lanfranc the Lombard, to prove to thee whether thy self-boastings have been a vain deceit, or whether, in this age of iron and amidst this lust of gold, thou, the penniless and the feeble, canst make knowledge and wit of more avail to the destinies of

kings than armed men and filled treasuries. I believe in that power. I am ready for the test. Pause, judge from what the Lord of Breteuil hath said to thee, what will be the defection of thy lords if the Pope confirm the threatened excommunication of thine uncle? Thine armies will rot from thee; thy treasures will be like dry leaves in thy coffers; the Duke of Bretagne will claim thy duchy as the legitimate heir of thy forefathers; the Duke of Burgundy will league with the King of France, and march on thy faithless legions under the banner of the Church. The handwriting is on the walls, and thy sceptre and thy crown will pass away."

William set his teeth firmly, and breathed hard.

" But send me to Rome, thy delegate, and the thunder of Mauger shall fall powerless. Marry Matilda, bring her to thy halls, place her on thy throne, laugh to scorn the interdict of thy traitor uncle, and rest assured that the Pope shall send thee his dispensation to thy spousals, and his benison on thy marriage-bed. And when this be done, Duke William, give me not abbacies and prelacies; multiply books, and stablish schools, and bid thy servant found the royalty of knowledge, as thou shalt found the sovereignty of war."

The Duke, transported from himself, leaped up and embraced the priest with his vast arms; he kissed his cheeks, he kissed his forehead, as, in those days, king kissed king with " the kiss of peace."

" Lanfranc of Pavia," he cried, " whether thou succeed or fail, thou hast my love and gratitude evermore. As thou speakest, would I have spoken, had I been born, framed, and reared as thou. And, verily, when I hear thee, I blush for the boasts of my barba-

rous pride, that no man can wield my mace, or bend my bow. Poor is the strength of body—a web of law can entangle it, and a word from a priest's mouth can palsy. But thou!—let me look at thee."

William gazed on the pale face: from head to foot he scanned the delicate, slender form, and then, turning away, he said to Fitzosborne:

"Thou, whose mailed hand hath fell'd a war-steed, art thou not ashamed of thyself? The day is coming, I see it afar, when these slight men shall set their feet upon our corslets."

He paused as if in thought, again paced the room, and stopped before the crucifix, and image of the Virgin, which stood in a niche near the bed-head.

"Right, noble prince," said the priest's low voice, "pause there for a solution to all enigmas; there view the symbol of all-enduring power; there, learn its ends below—comprehend the account it must yield above. To your thoughts and your prayers we leave you."

He took the stalwart arm of Taillefer, as he spoke, and, with a grave obeisance to Fitzosborne, left the chamber.

CHAPTER III

The next morning William was long closeted alone with Lanfranc,—that man, among the most remarkable of his age, of whom it was said, that "to comprehend the extent of his talents, one must be Herodian in grammar, Aristotle in dialectics, Cicero in rhetoric, Augustine and Jerome in Scriptural lore," [1]—and

[1] Ord. Vital. See Note on Lanfranc, at the end of the volume.

ere the noon the Duke's gallant and princely train were ordered to be in readiness for return home.

The crowd in the broad space, and the citizens from their boats in the river, gazed on the knights and steeds of that gorgeous company, already drawn up and awaiting without the open gates the sound of the trumpets that should announce the Duke's departure. Before the hall-door in the inner court were his own men. The snow-white steed of Odo; the alezan of Fitzosborne; and, to the marvel of all, a small palfrey plainly caparisoned. What did that palfrey amid those steeds?—the steeds themselves seemed to chafe at the companionship; the Duke's charger pricked up his ears and snorted; the Lord of Breteuil's alezan kicked out, as the poor nag humbly drew near to make acquaintance; and the prelate's white barb, with red vicious eye, and ears laid down, ran fiercely at the low-bred intruder, with difficulty reined in by the squires, who shared the beast's amaze and resentment.

Meanwhile the Duke thoughtfully took his way to Edward's apartments. In the anteroom were many monks and many knights: but conspicuous amongst them all was a tall and stately veteran, leaning on a great two-handed sword, and whose dress and fashion of beard were those of the last generation, the men who had fought with Canute the Great or Edmund Ironsides. So grand was the old man's aspect, and so did he contrast in appearance the narrow garb and shaven chins of those around, that the Duke was roused from his reverie at the sight, and marvelling why one, evidently a chief of high rank, had neither graced the banquet in his honour, nor been presented to his notice, he turned to the Earl of Hereford, who approached him with gay salutation, and inquired the

name and title of the bearded man in the loose flowing robe.

"Know you not, in truth?" said the lively Earl, in some wonder. "In him you see the great rival of Godwin. He is the hero of the Danes, as Godwin is of the Saxons, a true son of Odin, Siward, Earl of the Northumbrians." [1]

"Notre Dame be my aid,—his fame hath oft filled my ears, and I should have lost the most welcome sight in merrie England had I not now beheld him."

Therewith, the Duke approached courteously, and, doffing the cap he had hitherto retained, he greeted the old hero with those compliments which the Norman had already learned in the courts of the Frank.

The stout Earl received them coldly, and replying in Danish to William's Romance-tongue, he said:

"Pardon, Count of the Normans, if these old lips cling to their old words. Both of us, methinks, date our lineage from the lands of the Norse. Suffer Siward to speak the language the sea-kings spoke. The old oak is not to be transplanted, and the old man keeps the ground where his youth took root."

The Duke, who with some difficulty comprehended the general meaning of Siward's speech, bit his lip, but replied courteously:

"The youths of all nations may learn from renowned

[1] Siward was almost a giant (*pene gigas statura*). There are some curious anecdotes of this hero, immortalised by Shakspere, in the Bromton Chronicle. His grandfather is said to have been a bear, who fell in love with a Danish lady; and his father, Beorn, retained some of the traces of the parental physiognomy in a pair of pointed ears. The origin of this fable seems evident. His grandfather was a Berserker; for whether that name be derived, as is more generally supposed, from bare-sark,—or rather from bear-sark, that is, whether this grisly specimen of the Viking genus fought in his shirt or his bearskin, the name equally lends itself to those mystifications from which half the old legends, whether of Greece or Norway, are derived.

age. Much doth it shame me that I cannot commune with thee in the ancestral tongue; but the angels at least know the language of the Norman Christian, and I pray them and the saints for a calm end to thy brave career."

"Pray not to angel or saint for Siward son of Beorn," said the old man hastily; "let me not have a cow's death, but a warrior's; die in my mail of proof, axe in hand, and helm on head. And such may be my death, if Edward the King reads my rede and grants my prayer."

"I have influence with the King," said William; "name thy wish, that I may back it."

"The fiend forfend," said the grim Earl, "that a foreign prince should sway England's King, or that thegn and earl should ask other backing than leal service and just cause. If Edward be the saint men call him, he will loose me on the hell-wolf, without other cry than his own conscience."

The Duke turned inquiringly to Rolf; who, thus appealed to, said:

"Siward urges my uncle to espouse the cause of Malcolm of Cumbria against the bloody tyrant Macbeth; and but for the disputes with the traitor Godwin, the King had long since turned his arms to Scotland."

"Call not traitors, young man," said the Earl, in high disdain, "those who, with all their faults and crimes, have placed thy kinsman on the throne of Canute."

"Hush, Rolf," said the Duke, observing the fierce young Norman about to reply hastily. "But methought, though my knowledge of English troubles is but scant, that Siward was the sworn foe to Godwin?"

"Foe to him in his power, friend to him in his wrongs," answered Siward. "And if England needs defenders when I and Godwin are in our shrouds, there is but one man worthy of the days of old, and his name is Harold, the outlaw."

William's face changed remarkably, despite all his dissimulation; and, with a slight inclination of his head, he strode on moody and irritated.

"This Harold! this Harold!" he muttered to himself, "all brave men speak to me of this Harold! Even my Norman knights name him with reluctant reverence, and even his foes do him honour;—verily his shadow is cast from exile over all the land."

Thus murmuring, he passed the throng with less than his wonted affable grace, and pushing back the officers who wished to precede him, entered, without ceremony, Edward's private chamber.

The King was alone, but talking loudly to himself, gesticulating vehemently, and altogether so changed from his ordinary placid apathy of mien, that William drew back in alarm and awe. Often had he heard indirectly, that of late years Edward was said to see visions, and be rapt from himself into the world of spirit and shadow; and such, he now doubted not, was the strange paroxysm of which he was made the witness. Edward's eyes were fixed on him, but evidently without recognising his presence; the King's hands were outstretched, and he cried aloud in a voice of sharp anguish:

"*Sanguelac, Sanguelac!*—the Lake of Blood!—the waves spread, the waves redden! Mother of mercy —where is the ark?—where the Ararat?—Fly—fly—this way—this—" and he caught convulsive hold of William's arm. "No! there the corpses are piled—

high and higher—there the horse of the Apocalypse tramples the dead in their gore."

In great horror, William took the King, now gasping on his breast, in his arms, and laid him on his bed, beneath its canopy of state, all blazoned with the martlets and cross of his insignia. Slowly Edward came to himself, with heavy sighs; and when at length he sate up and looked round, it was with evident unconsciousness of what had passed across his haggard and wandering spirit, for he said, with his usual drowsy calmness:

"Thanks, Guillaume, *bien aimé*, for rousing me from unseasoned sleep. How fares it with thee?"

"Nay, how with thee, dear friend and king? thy dreams have been troubled."

"Not so; I slept so heavily, methinks I could not have dreamed at all. But thou art clad as for a journey—spur on thy heel, staff in thy hand!"

"Long since, O dear host, I sent Odo to tell thee of the ill news from Normandy that compelled me to depart."

"I remember—I remember me now," said Edward, passing his pale womanly fingers over his forehead. "The heathen rage against thee. Ah! my poor brother, a crown is an awful head-gear. While yet time, why not both seek some quiet convent, and put away these earthly cares?"

William smiled and shook his head. "Nay, holy Edward, from all I have seen of convents, it is a dream to think that the monk's serge hides a calmer breast than the warrior's mail, or the king's ermine. Now give me thy benison, for I go."

He knelt as he spoke, and Edward bent his hands over his head, and blessed him. Then, taking from

"This Harold! this Harold! all brave men speak to me of this Harold."

his own neck a collar of zimmes (jewels and uncut gems), of great price, the King threw it over the broad throat bent before him, and rising, clapped his hands. A small door opened, giving a glimpse of the oratory within, and a monk appeared.

"Father, have my behests been fulfilled?—hath Hugoline, my treasurer, dispensed the gifts that I spoke of?"

"Verily yes; vault, coffer, and garde-robe—stall and meuse—are well nigh drained," answered the monk, with a sour look at the Norman, whose native avarice gleamed in his dark eyes as he heard the answer.

"Thy train go not hence empty-handed," said Edward fondly. "Thy father's halls sheltered the exile, and the exile forgets not the sole pleasure of a king—the power to requite. We may never meet again, William,—age creeps over me, and who will succeed to my thorny throne?"

William longed to answer,—to tell the hope that consumed him,—to remind his cousin of the vague promise in their youth, that the Norman Count should succeed to that "thorny throne:" but the presence of the Saxon monk repelled him, nor was there in Edward's uneasy look much to allure him on.

"But peace," continued the King, "be between thine and mine, as between thee and me!"

"Amen," said the Duke, "and I leave thee at least free from the proud rebels who so long disturbed thy reign. This House of Godwin, thou wilt not again let it tower above thy palace?"

"Nay, the future is with God and his saints;" answered Edward, feebly. "But Godwin is old—older than I, and bowed by many storms."

"Ay, his sons are more to be dreaded and kept aloof —mostly Harold!"

"Harold,—he was ever obedient, he alone of his kith; truly my soul mourns for Harold," said the King, sighing.

"The serpent's egg hatches but the serpent. Keep thy heel on it," said William, sternly.

"Thou speakest well," said the irresolute prince, who never seemed three days or three minutes together in the same mind. "Harold is in Ireland—there let him rest: better for all."

"For all," said the Duke; "so the saints keep thee, O royal saint!"

He kissed the King's hand, and strode away to the hall where Odo, Fitzosborne, and the priest Lanfranc awaited him. And so that day, halfway towards the fair town of Dover, rode Duke William, and by the side of his roan barb ambled the priest's palfrey.

Behind came his gallant train, and with tumbrils and sumpter-mules laden with baggage, and enriched by Edward's gifts; while Welch hawks, and steeds of great price from the pastures of Surrey and the plains of Cambridge and York, attested no less acceptably than zimme, and golden chain, and embroidered robe, the munificence of the grateful King.[1]

As they journeyed on, and the fame of the Duke's coming was sent abroad by the bodes or messengers, despatched to prepare the towns through which he was to pass for an arrival sooner than expected, the more highborn youths of England, especially those of the party counter to that of the banished Godwin, came round the ways to gaze upon that famous chief, who, from the age of fifteen, had wielded the most redoubt-

[1] Wace.

able sword of Christendom. And those youths wore the Norman garb: and in the towns, Norman counts held his stirrup to dismount, and Norman hosts spread the fastidious board; and when, at the eve of the next day, William saw the pennant of one of his own favourite chiefs waving in the van of armed men, that sallied forth from the towers of Dover (the key of the coast) he turned to the Lombard, still by his side, and said:

"Is not England part of Normandy already?"

And the Lombard answered:

"The fruit is well nigh ripe, and the first breeze will shake it to thy feet. Put not out thy hand too soon. Let the wind do its work."

And the Duke made reply:

"As thou thinkest, so think I. And there is but one wind in the halls of heaven that can waft the fruit to the feet of another."

"And that?" asked the Lombard.

"Is the wind that blows from the shores of Ireland, when it fills the sails of Harold, son of Godwin."

"Thou fearest that man, and why?" asked the Lombard with interest.

And the Duke answered:

"Because in the breast of Harold beats the heart of England."

BOOK III

THE HOUSE OF GODWIN

CHAPTER I

And all went to the desire of Duke William the Norman. With one hand he curbed his proud vassals, and drove back his fierce foes. With the other, he led to the altar Matilda, the maid of Flanders; and all happened as Lanfranc had foretold. William's most formidable enemy, the King of France, ceased to conspire against his new kinsman; and the neighbouring princes said, "The Bastard hath become one of us since he placed by his side the descendant of Charlemagne." And Mauger, Archbishop of Rouen, excommunicated the Duke and his bride, and the ban fell idle; for Lanfranc sent from Rome the Pope's dispensation and blessing,[1] conditionally only that bride and bridegroom founded each a church. And Mauger was summoned before the synod, and accused of unclerical crimes; and they deposed him from his state, and took from him abbacies and sees. And England every day waxed more and more Norman; and Edward grew more feeble and infirm, and there seemed not a barrier between the Norman Duke and the English throne, when suddenly the wind blew in the halls of heaven, and filled the sails of Harold the Earl.

[1] See Note (E), at the end of the volume (foot-note on the date of William's marriage).

And his ships came to the mouth of the Severn. And the people of Somerset and Devon, a mixed and mainly a Celtic race, who bore small love to the Saxons, drew together against him, and he put them to flight.[1]

Meanwhile, Godwin and his sons Sweyn, Tostig, and Gurth, who had taken refuge in that very Flanders from which William the Duke had won his bride, —(for Tostig had wed, previously, the sister of Matilda, the rose of Flanders; and Count Baldwin had, for his sons-in-law, both Tostig and William,)—meanwhile, I say, these, not holpen by the Count Baldwin, but helping themselves, lay at Bruges, ready to join Harold the Earl. And Edward, advised of this from the anxious Norman, caused forty ships[2] to be equipped, and put them under command of Rolf, Earl of Hereford. The ships lay at Sandwich in wait for Godwin. But the old Earl got from them, and landed quietly on the southern coast. And the fort of Hastings opened to his coming with a shout from its armed men.

All the boatmen, all the mariners, far and near, thronged to him, with sail and with shield, with sword and with oar. All Kent (the foster-mother of the Saxons) sent forth the cry, "Life or death with Earl Godwin."[3] Fast over the length and breadth of the land, went the bodes[4] and riders of the Earl; and hosts, with one voice, answered the cry of the children of Horsa, "Life or death with Earl Godwin." And the ships of King Edward, in dismay, turned flag and prow to London, and the fleet of Harold sailed on. So the

[1] *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle.*
[2] Hovenden.
[3] Some writers say fifty.
[4] *Bodes, i.e.* messengers.

old Earl met his young son on the deck of a war-ship, that had once borne the Raven of the Dane.

Swelled and gathering sailed the armament of the English men. Slow up the Thames it sailed, and on either shore marched tumultuous the swarming multitudes. And King Edward sent after more help, but it came up very late. So the fleet of the Earl nearly faced the Julliet Keape of London, and abode at Southwark till the flood-tide came up. When he had mustered his host, then came the flood-tide.[1]

CHAPTER II

King Edward sate, not on his throne, but on a chair of state, in the presence-chamber of his palace of Westminster. His diadem, with the three zimmes shaped into a triple trefoil [2] on his brow, his sceptre in his right hand. His royal robe, tight to the throat, with a broad band of gold, flowed to his feet; and at the fold gathered round the left knee, where now the kings of England wear the badge of St. George, was embroidered a simple cross.[3] In that chamber met the thegns and proceres of his realm; but not they alone. No national Witan there assembled, but a council of war, composed at least one third part of Normans—counts, knights, prelates, and abbots of high degree.

And King Edward looked a king! The habitual lethargic meekness had vanished from his face, and the large crown threw a shadow, like a frown, over his brow. His spirit seemed to have risen from the

[1] *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle.*

[2] Or Fleur-de-lis, which seems to have been a common form of ornament with the Saxon kings.

[3] Bayeux Tapestry.

weight it took from the sluggish blood of his father, Ethelred the Unready, and to have remounted to the brighter and earlier sources of ancestral heroes. Worthy in that hour he seemed to boast the blood and wield the sceptre of Athelstan and Alfred.[1]

Thus spoke the King:

"Right worthy and beloved, my ealdermen, earls, and thegns of England; noble and familiar, my friends and guests, counts and chevaliers of Normandy, my mother's land; and you, our spiritual chiefs, above all ties of birth and country, Christendom your common appanage, and from Heaven your seignories and fiefs,—hear the words of Edward, the King of England under grace of the Most High. The rebels are in our river; open yonder lattice, and you will see the piled shields glittering from their barks, and hear the hum of their hosts. Not a bow has yet been drawn, not a sword left its sheath; yet on the opposite side of the river are our fleets of forty sail—along the strand, between our palace and the gates of London, are arrayed our armies. And this pause because Godwin the traitor hath demanded truce and his nuncius waits without. Are ye willing that we should hear the message? or would ye rather that we dismiss the messenger unheard, and pass at once, to rank and to sail, the war-cry of a Christian king, 'Holy Crosse and our Lady!'"

The King ceased, his left hand grasping firm the leopard head carved on his throne, and his sceptre untrembling in his lifted hand.

A murmur of *Notre Dame, Notre Dame,* the war-cry of the Normans, was heard amongst the stranger-knights of the audience; but haughty and arrogant as

[1] See Note (F), at the end of the volume.

those strangers were, no one presumed to take precedence, in England's danger, of men English born.

Slowly then rose Alred, Bishop of Winchester, the worthiest prelate in all the land.[1]

"Kingly son," said the bishop, "evil is the strife between men of the same blood and lineage, nor justified but by extremes, which have not yet been made clear to us. And ill would it sound throughout England were it said that the King's council gave, perchance, his city of London to sword and fire, and rent his land in twain, when a word in season might have disbanded yon armies, and given to your throne a submissive subject, where now you are menaced by a formidable rebel. Wherefore, I say, admit the nuncius."

Scarcely had Alred resumed his seat, before Robert the Norman prelate of Canterbury started up,—a man, it was said, of worldly learning—and exclaimed:

"To admit the messenger is to approve the treason. I do beseech the King to consult only his royal heart and royal honour. Reflect—each moment of delay swells the rebel hosts, strengthens their cause; of each moment they avail themselves to allure to their side the misguided citizens. Delay but proves our own weakness; a king's name is a tower of strength, but only when fortified by a king's authority. Give the signal for—*war* I call it not—no—for chastisement and justice."

[1] The *York Chronicle*, written by an Englishman, Stubbs, gives this eminent person an excellent character as peacemaker. "He could make the warmest friends of foes the most hostile." "De inimicissimis, amicissimos faceret." This gentle priest had yet the courage to curse the Norman Conqueror in the midst of his barons. That scene is not within the range of this work, but it is very strikingly told in the *Chronicle*.

"As speaks my brother of Canterbury, speak I," said William, Bishop of London, another Norman.

But then there rose up a form at whose rising all murmurs were hushed.

Grey and vast, as some image of a gone and mightier age towered over all, Siward, the son of Beorn, the great Earl of Northumbria.

"We have naught to do with the Normans. Were they on the river, and our countrymen, Dane or Saxon, alone in this hall, small doubt of the King's choice, and niddering were the man who spoke of peace; but when Norman advises the dwellers of England to go forth and slay each other, no sword of mine shall be drawn at his hest. Who shall say that Siward of the Strong Arm, the grandson of the Berserker, ever turned from a foe? The foe, son of Ethelred, sits in these halls; I fight thy battles when I say Nay to the Norman! Brothers-in-arms of the kindred race and common tongue, Dane and Saxon long intermingled, proud alike of Canute the glorious and Alfred the wise, ye will hear the man whom Godwin, our countryman, sends to us; he at least will speak our tongue, and he knows our laws. If the demand he delivers be just, such as a king should grant, and our Witan should hear, woe to him who refuses; if unjust be the demand, shame to him who accedes. Warrior sends to warrior, countryman to countryman; hear we as countrymen, and judge as warriors. I have said."

The utmost excitement and agitation followed the speech of Siward,—unanimous applause from the Saxons, even those who in times of peace were most under the Norman contagion; but no words can paint the wrath and scorn of the Normans. They spoke loud and many at a time; the greatest disorder prevailed.

But the majority being English, there could be no doubt as to the decision; and Edward, to whom the emergence gave both a dignity and presence of mind rare to him, resolved to terminate the dispute at once. He stretched forth his sceptre, and motioning to his chamberlain, bade him introduce the nuncius.[1]

A blank disappointment, not unmixed with apprehensive terror, succeeded the turbulent excitement of the Normans; for well they knew that the consequences, if not condition, of negotiations, would be their own downfall and banishment at the least;—happy, it might be, to escape massacre at the hands of the exasperated multitude.

The door at the end of the room opened, and the nuncius appeared. He was a sturdy, broad-shouldered man, of middle age, and in the long loose garb originally national with the Saxon, though then little in vogue; his beard thick and fair, his eyes grey and calm —a chief of Kent, where all the prejudices of his race were strongest, and whose yeomanry claimed in war the hereditary right to be placed in the front of battle.

He made his manly but deferential salutation to the august council as he approached; and, pausing midway between the throne and door, he fell on his knees without thought of shame, for the King to whom he knelt was the descendant of Woden, and the heir of Hengist. At a sign and a brief word from the King, still on his knees, Vebba, the Kentman, spoke.

"To Edward, son of Ethelred, his most gracious king and lord, Godwin, son of Wolnoth, sends faithful and humble greeting, by Vebba, the thegn-born.

[1] Heralds, though probably the word is Saxon, were not then known in the modern acceptation of the word. The name given to the messenger or envoy who fulfilled that office was bode or nuncius. See Note (G), at the end of the volume.

He prays the King to hear him in kindness, and judge of him with mercy. Not against the King comes he hither with ships and arms; but against those only who would stand between the King's heart and the subject's: those who have divided a house against itself, and parted son and father, man and wife."

At those last words Edward's sceptre trembled in his hand, and his face grew almost stern.

"Of the King, Godwin but prays with all submiss and earnest prayer, to reverse the unrighteous outlawry against him and his; to restore him and his sons their just possessions and well-won honours; and, more than all, to replace them where they have sought by loving service not unworthily to stand, in the grace of their born lord and in the van of those who would uphold the laws and liberties of England. This done —the ships sail back to their haven; the thegn seeks his homestead and the ceorl returns to the plough; for with Godwin are no strangers; and his force is but the love of his countrymen."

"Hast thou said?" quoth the King.

"I have said."

"Retire, and await our answer."

The Thegn of Kent was then led back into an anteroom, in which, armed from head to heel in ring-mail, were several Normans whose youth or station did not admit them into the council, but still of no mean interest in the discussion, from the lands and possessions they had already contrived to gripe out of the demesnes of the exiles;—burning for battle and eager for the word. Amongst these was Mallet de Graville.

The Norman valour of this young knight was, as we have seen, guided by Norman intelligence; and he had not disdained, since William's departure, to study

the tongue of the country in which he hoped to exchange his mortgaged tower on the Seine, for some fair barony on the Humber or the Thames.

While the rest of his proud countrymen stood aloof, with eyes of silent scorn, from the homely nuncius, Mallet approached him with courteous bearing, and said in Saxon:

"May I crave to know the issue of thy message from the reb—that is from the doughty Earl?"

"I wait to learn it," said Vebba, bluffly.

"They heard thee throughout, then?"

"Throughout."

"Friendly Sir," said the Sire de Graville, seeking to subdue the tone of irony habitual to him, and acquired, perhaps, from his maternal ancestry, the Franks. "Friendly and peace-making Sir, dare I so far venture to intrude on the secrets of thy mission as to ask if Godwin demands, among other reasonable items, the head of thy humble servant—not by name indeed, for my name is as yet unknown to him—but as one of the unhappy class called Normans?"

"Had Earl Godwin," returned the nuncius, "thought fit to treat for peace by asking vengeance, he would have chosen another spokesman. The Earl asks but his own; and thy head is not, I trow, a part of his goods and chattels."

"That is comforting," said Mallet. "Marry, I thank thee, Sir Saxon; and thou speakest like a brave man and an honest. And if we fall to blows, as I suspect we shall, I should deem it a favour of our Lady the Virgin if she send thee across my way. Next to a fair friend I love a bold foe."

Vebba smiled, for he liked the sentiment, and the tone and air of the young knight pleased his rough mind, despite his prejudices against the stranger.

Encouraged by the smile, Mallet seated himself on the corner of the long table that skirted the room, and with a debonnair gesture invited Vebba to do the same; then looking at him gravely, he resumed:

"So frank and courteous thou art, Sir Envoy, that I yet intrude on thee my ignorant and curious questions."

"Speak out, Norman."

"How comes it, then, that you English so love this Earl Godwin?—Still more, why think you it right and proper that King Edward should love him too? It is a question I have often asked, and to which I am not likely in these halls to get answer satisfactory. If I know aught of your troublous history, this same Earl has changed sides oft eno'; first for the Saxon, then for Canute the Dane—Canute dies, and your friend takes up arms for the Saxon again. He yields to the advice of your Witan, and sides with Hardicanute and Harold, the Danes—a letter, nathless, is written as from Emma, the mother to the young Saxon princes, Edward and Alfred, inviting them over to England, and promising aid; the saints protect Edward, who continues to say *aves* in Normandy—Alfred comes over, Earl Godwin meets him, and, unless belied, does him homage, and swears to him faith. Nay, listen yet. This Godwin, whom ye love so, then leads Alfred and his train into the ville of Guildford, I think ye call it,—fair quarters enow. At the dead of the night rush in King Harold's men, seize prince and follower, six hundred men in all; and next morning, saving only every tenth man, they are tortured and put to death. The prince is borne off to London, and shortly afterwards his eyes are torn out in the Islet of Ely, and he dies of the anguish! That ye should love

Earl Godwin withal may be strange, but yet possible. But is it possible, *cher* Envoy, for the King to love the man who thus betrayed his brother to the shambles?"

"All this is a Norman fable," said the Thegn of Kent, with a disturbed visage; "and Godwin cleared himself on oath of all share in the foul murder of Alfred."

"The oath, I have heard, was backed," said the knight drily, "by a present to Hardicanute, who after the death of King Harold resolved to avenge the black butchery; a present, I say, of a gilt ship, manned by fourscore warriors with gold-hilted swords, and gilt helms.—But let this pass."

"Let it pass," echoed Vebba with a sigh. "Bloody were those times, and unholy their secrets."

"Yet answer me still, why love you Earl Godwin? He hath changed sides from party to party, and in each change won lordships and lands. He is ambitious and grasping, ye all allow; for the ballads sung in your streets liken him to the thorn and the bramble, at which the sheep leaves his wool. He is haughty and overbearing. Tell me, O Saxon, frank Saxon, why you love Godwin the Earl? Fain would I know; for, please the saints (and you and your Earl so permitting), I mean to live and die in this merrie England; and it would be pleasant to learn that I have but to do as Earl Godwin, in order to win love from the English."

The stout Vebba looked perplexed; but after stroking his beard thoughtfully, he answered thus:

"Though of Kent, and therefore in his earldom, I am not one of Godwin's especial party; for that reason was I chosen his bode. Those who are under him

doubtless love a chief liberal to give and strong to protect. The old age of a great leader gathers reverence, as an oak gathers moss. But to me, and those like me, living peaceful at home, shunning courts, and tempting not broils, Godwin the *man* is not dear—it is Godwin the *thing*."

"Though I do my best to know your language," said the knight, "ye have phrases that might puzzle King Solomon. What meanest thou by 'Godwin the thing'?"

"That which to us Godwin only seems to uphold. We love justice; whatever his offences, Godwin was banished unjustly. We love our laws; Godwin was dishonoured by maintaining them. We love England, and are devoured by strangers; Godwin's cause is England's, and—stranger, forgive me for not concluding."

Then examining the young Norman with a look of rough compassion, he laid his large hand upon the knight's shoulder and whispered:

"Take my advice—and fly."

"Fly!" said De Graville, reddening. "Is it to fly, think you, that I have put on my mail, and girded my sword?"

"Vain—vain! Wasps are fierce, but the swarm is doomed when the straw is kindled. I tell you this—fly in time, and you are safe; but let the King be so misguided as to count on arms, and strive against yon multitude, and verily before nightfall not one Norman will be found alive within ten miles of the city. Look to it, youth! Perhaps thou hast a mother—let her not mourn a son!"

Before the Norman could shape into Saxon sufficiently polite and courtly his profound and indignant

disdain of the counsel, his sense of the impertinence with which his shoulder had been profaned, and his mother's son had been warned, the nuncius was again summoned into the presence-chamber. Nor did he return into the ante-room, but conducted forthwith from the council—his brief answer received—to the stairs of the palace, he reached the boat in which he had come, and was rowed back to the ship that held the Earl and his sons.

Now this was the manœuvre of Godwin's array. His vessels having passed London Bridge, had rested awhile on the banks of the Southward suburb (Suthweorde)—since called Southwark—and the King's ships lay to the north; but the fleet of the Earl's, after a brief halt, veered majestically round, and coming close to the palace of Westminster, inclined northward, as if to hem the King's ships. Meanwhile the land forces drew up close to the Strand, almost within bow-shot of the King's troops, that kept the ground inland; thus Vebba saw before him, so near as scarcely to be distinguished from each other, on the river the rival fleets, on the shore the rival armaments.

High above all the vessels towered the majestic bark, or æsca, that had borne Harold from the Irish shores. Its fashion was that of the ancient sea-kings, to one of whom it had belonged. Its curved and mighty prow, richly gilded, stood out far above the waves: the prow, the head of the sea-snake; the stern its spire; head and spire alike glittering in the sun.

The boat drew up to the lofty side of the vessel, a ladder was lowered, the nuncius ascended lightly and stood on deck. At the farther end grouped the sailors, few in number, and at respectful distance from the Earl and his sons.

Godwin himself was but half armed. His head was bare, nor had he other weapon of offence than the gilt battle-axe of the Danes—weapon as much of office as of war; but his broad breast was covered with the ring mail of the time. His stature was lower than that of any of his sons; nor did his form exhibit greater physical strength than that of a man, well shaped, robust, and deep of chest, who still preserved in age the pith and sinew of mature manhood. Neither, indeed, did legend or fame ascribe to that eminent personage those romantic achievements, those feats of purely animal prowess, which distinguished his rival, Siward. Brave he was, but brave as a leader; those faculties in which he appears to have excelled all his contemporaries, were more analogous to the requisites of success in civilised times, than those which won renown of old. And perhaps England was the only country then in Europe which could have given to those faculties their fitting career. He possessed essentially the arts of party; he knew how to deal with vast masses of mankind; he could carry along with his interests the fervid heart of the multitude; he had in the highest degree that gift, useless in most other lands—in all lands where popular assemblies do not exist—the gift of popular eloquence. Ages elapsed, after the Norman conquest, ere eloquence again became a power in England.[1]

But like all men renowned for eloquence, he went with the popular feeling of his times; he embodied its passions, its prejudices—but also that keen sense of self-interest, which is the invariable characteristic of a multitude. He *was* the sense of the commonalty

[1] When the chronicler praises the gift of speech, he unconsciously proves the existence of constitutional freedom.

carried to its highest degree. Whatever the faults, it may be the crimes, of a career singularly prosperous and splendid, amidst events the darkest and most terrible,—shining with a steady light across the thunder-clouds,—he was never accused of cruelty or outrage to the mass of the people. English, emphatically, the English deemed him; and this not the less that in his youth he had sided with Canute, and owed his fortunes to that king; for so intermixed were Danes and Saxons in England, that the agreement which had given to Canute one half the kingdom had been received with general applause; and the earlier severities of that great prince had been so redeemed in his later years by wisdom and mildness—so, even in the worst period of his reign, relieved by extraordinary personal affability, and so lost now in men's memories by pride in his power and fame,—that Canute had left behind him a beloved and honoured name,[1] and Godwin was the more esteemed as the chosen counsellor of that popular prince. At his death, Godwin was known to have wished, and even armed, for the restoration of the Saxon line; and only yielded to the determination of the Witan, no doubt acted upon by the popular opinion. Of one dark crime he was suspected, and, despite his oath to the contrary, and the formal acquittal of the national council, doubt of his guilt rested then, as it rests still, upon his name; viz., the perfidious surrender of Alfred, Edward's murdered brother.

But time had passed over the dismal tragedy; and

[1] Recent Danish historians have in vain endeavoured to detract from the reputation of Canute as an *English* monarch. The Danes are, doubtless, the best authorities for his character in Denmark. But our own English authorities are sufficiently decisive as to the personal popularity of Canute in this country, and the affection entertained for his laws.

there was an instinctive and prophetic feeling throughout the English nation, that with the House of Godwin was identified the cause of the English people. Everything in this man's aspect served to plead in his favour. His ample brows were calm with benignity and thought; his large dark blue eyes were serene and mild, though their expression, when examined, was close and inscrutable. His mien was singularly noble, but wholly without formality or affected state; and though haughtiness and arrogance were largely attributed to him, they could be found only in his deeds, not manner—plain, familiar, kindly to all men, his heart seemed as open to the service of his countrymen as his hospitable door to their wants.

Behind him stood the stateliest group of sons that ever filled with pride a father's eye. Each strikingly distinguished from the other, all remarkable for beauty of countenance and strength of frame.

Sweyn, the eldest,[1] had the dark hues of his mother the Dane: a wild and mournful majesty sat upon features aquiline and regular, but wasted by grief or passion; raven locks, glossy even in neglect, fell half over eyes hollow in their sockets, but bright, though with troubled fire. Over his shoulder he bore his mighty axe. His form, spare, but of immense power, was

[1] Some of our historians erroneously represent Harold as the eldest son. But Florence, the best authority we have, in the silence of the *Saxon Chronicle*, as well as Knyghton, distinctly states Sweyn to be the eldest; Harold was the second, and Tostig was the third. Sweyn's seniority seems corroborated by the greater importance of his earldom. The Norman chroniclers, in their spite to Harold, wish to make him junior to Tostig—for the reasons evident at the close of this work. And the Norwegian chronicler, Snorro Sturleson, says that Harold was the youngest of all the sons; so little was really known, or cared to be accurately known, of that great house which so nearly founded a new dynasty of English kings.

sheathed in mail, and he leant on his great pointed Danish shield. At his feet sate his young son Haco, a boy with a countenance preternaturally thoughtful for his years, which were yet those of childhood.

Next to him stood the most dreaded and ruthless of the sons of Godwin—he, fated to become to the Saxon what Julian was to the Goth. With his arms folded on his breast stood Tostig; his face was beautiful as a Greek's, in all save the forehead, which was low and lowering. Sleek and trim were his bright chestnut locks; and his arms were damascened with silver, for he was one who loved the pomp and luxury of war.

Wolnoth, the mother's favourite, seemed yet in the first flower of youth, but he alone of all the sons had something irresolute and effeminate in his aspect and bearing; his form, though tall, had not yet come to its full height and strength; and, as if the weight of mail were unusual to him, he leant with both hands upon the wood of his long spear. Leofwine, who stood next to Wolnoth, contrasted him notably; his sunny locks wreathed carelessly over a white unclouded brow, and the silken hair on the upper lip quivered over arch lips, smiling, even in that serious hour.

At Godwin's right hand, but not immediately near him, stood the last of the group, Gurth and Harold. Gurth had passed his arm over the shoulder of his brother, and, not watching the nuncius while he spoke, watched only the effect his words produced on the face of Harold. For Gurth loved Harold as Jonathan loved David. And Harold was the only one of the group not armed; and had a veteran skilled in war been asked who of that group was born to lead armed men, he would have pointed to the man unarmed.

"So what says the King?" asked Earl Godwin.

"This; he refuses to restore thee and thy sons, or to hear thee, till thou hast disbanded thine army, dismissed thy ships, and consented to clear thyself and thy house before the Witanagemot."

A fierce laugh broke from Tostig; Sweyn's mournful brow grew darker; Leofwine placed his right hand on his ateghar; Wolnoth rose erect; Gurth kept his eyes on Harold, and Harold's face was unmoved.

"The King received thee in his council of war," said Godwin, thoughtfully, "and doubtless the Normans were there. Who were the Englishmen most of mark?"

"Siward of Northumbria, thy foe."

"My sons," said the Earl, turning to his children, and breathing loud as if a load were off his heart; "there will be no need of axe or armour to-day. Harold alone was wise," and he pointed to the linen tunic of the son thus cited.

"What mean you, Sir Father?" said Tostig, imperiously. "Think you to——"

"Peace, son, peace;" said Godwin, without asperity, but with conscious command. "Return, brave and dear friend," he said to Vebba, "find out Siward the Earl; tell him that I, Godwin, his foe in the old time, place honour and life in his hands, and what he counsels that will we do.—Go."

The Kent man nodded, and regained his boat. Then spoke Harold.

"Father, yonder are the forces of Edward; as yet without leaders, since the chiefs must still be in the halls of the King. Some fiery Norman amongst them may provoke an encounter; and this city of London is not won, as it behoves us to win it, if one drop

of English blood dye the sword of one English man. Wherefore, with your leave, I will take boat, and land. And unless I have lost in my absence all right lere in the hearts of our countrymen, at the first shout from our troops which proclaims that Harold, son of Godwin, is on the soil of our fathers, half yon array of spears and helms pass at once to our side."

"And if not, my vain brother?" said Tostig, gnawing his lip with envy.

"And if not, I will ride alone into the midst of them, and ask what Englishmen are there who will aim shaft or spear at this breast, never mailed against England!"

Godwin placed his hand on Harold's head, and the tears came to those close cold eyes.

"Thou knowest by nature what I have learned by art. Go, and prosper. Be it as thou wilt."

"He takes thy post, Sweyn—thou art the elder," said Tostig, to the wild form by his side.

"There is guilt on my soul, and woe in my heart," answered Sweyn, moodily. "Shall Esau lose his birthright, and Cain retain it?" So saying, he withdrew, and, reclining against the stern of the vessel, leant his face upon the edge of his shield.

Harold watched him with deep compassion in his eyes, passed to his side with a quick step, pressed his hand, and whispered, "Peace to the past, O my brother!"

The boy Haco, who had noiselessly followed his father, lifted his sombre, serious looks to Harold as he thus spoke; and when Harold turned away, he said to Sweyn, timidly, "*He*, at least, is ever good to thee and to me."

"And thou, when I am no more, shalt cling to him

as thy father, Haco," answered Sweyn, tenderly smoothing back the child's dark locks.

The boy shivered; and, bending his head, murmured to himself, "When thou art no more! No more? Has the Vala doomed *him*, too? Father and son, both?"

Meanwhile, Harold had entered the boat lowered from the sides of the æsca to receive him; and Gurth, looking appealingly to his father, and seeing no sign of dissent, sprang down after the young Earl, and seated himself by his side.

Godwin followed the boat with musing eyes.

"Small need," said he, aloud, but to himself, "to believe in soothsayers, or to credit Hilda the saga, when she prophesied, ere we left our shores, that Harold——" He stopped short, for Tostig's wrathful exclamation broke on his reverie.

"Father, father! My blood surges in my ears, and boils in my heart, when I hear thee name the prophecies of Hilda in favour of thy darling. Dissension and strife in our house have they wrought already; and if the feuds between Harold and me have sown grey in thy locks, thank thyself when, flushed with vain soothsayings for thy favoured Harold, thou saidst, in the hour of our first childish broil, 'Strive not with Harold; for his brothers will be his men.'"

"Falsify the prediction," said Godwin, calmly; "wise men may always make their own future, and seize their own fates. Prudence, patience, labour, valour; these are the stars that rule the career of mortals."

Tostig made no answer; for the splash of oars was near, and two ships, containing the principal chiefs that had joined Godwin's cause, came alongside the

Runic æsca to hear the result of the message sent to the King. Tostig sprang to the vessel's side, and exclaimed, "The King, girt by his false counsellors, will hear us not, and arms must decide between us."

"Hold, hold! malignant, unhappy boy!" cried Godwin, between his grinded teeth, as a shout of indignant, yet joyous ferocity broke from the crowded ships thus hailed. "The curse of all time be on him who draws the first native blood in sight of the altars and hearths of London! Hear me, thou with the vulture's blood-lust, and the peacock's vain joy in the gaudy plume! Hear me, Tostig, and tremble. If but by one word thou widen the breach between me and the King, outlaw thou enterest England, outlaw shalt thou depart—for earldom and broad lands, choose the bread of the stranger, and the weregeld of the wolf!"

The young Saxon, haughty as he was, quailed at his father's thrilling voice, bowed his head, and retreated sullenly. Godwin sprang on the deck of the nearest vessel, and all the passions that Tostig had aroused, he exerted his eloquence to appease.

In the midst of his arguments, there rose from the ranks on the strand, the shout of "Harold! Harold the Earl! Harold and Holy Crosse!" And Godwin, turning his eye to the King's ranks, saw them agitated, swayed, and moving; till suddenly, from the very heart of the hostile array, came, as by irresistible impulse, the cry, "Harold, our Harold! All hail, the good Earl!"

While this chanced without,—within the palace, Edward had quitted the presence-chamber, and was closeted with Stigand, the bishop. This prelate had the more influence with Edward, inasmuch as though

Saxon, he was held to be no enemy to the Normans, and had, indeed, on a former occasion, been deposed from his bishopric on the charge of too great an attachment to the Norman queen-mother Emma.[1] Never in his whole life had Edward been so stubborn as on this occasion. For here, more than his realm was concerned, he was threatened in the peace of his household, and the comfort of his tepid friendships. With the recall of his powerful father-in-law, he foresaw the necessary reintrusion of his wife upon the charm of his chaste solitude. His favourite Normans would be banished, he should be surrounded with faces he abhorred. All the representations of Stigand fell upon a stern and unyielding spirit, when Siward entered the King's closet.

"Sir, my King," said the great son of Beorn, "I yielded to your kingly will in the council, that, before we listened to Godwin, he should disband his men, and submit to the judgment of the Witan. The Earl hath sent me to say, that he will put honour and life in my keeping, and abide by my counsel. And I have answered as became the man who will never snare a foe, or betray a trust."

"How hast thou answered?" asked the King.

"That he abide by the laws of England, as Dane and Saxon agreed to abide in the days of Canute; that he and his sons shall make no claim for land or lordship, but submit all to the Witan."

"Good," said the King; "and the Witan will con-

[1] *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, A.D. 1043. "Stigand was deposed from his bishopric, and all that he possessed was seized into the King's hands, because he was received to his mother's counsel, and she went just as he advised her, as people thought." The saintly Confessor dealt with his bishops as summarily as Henry VIII. could have done, after his quarrel with the Pope.

demn him now, as it would have condemned when he shunned to meet it."

"And the Witan *now*," returned the Earl emphatically, "will be free, and fair, and just."

"And meanwhile, the troops——"

"Will wait on either side; and if reason fail, then the sword," said Siward.

"This I will not hear," exclaimed Edward; when the tramp of many feet thundered along the passage; the door was flung open, and several captains (Norman as well as Saxon) of the King's troops rushed in, wild, rude, and tumultuous.

"The troops desert! half the ranks have thrown down their arms at the very name of Harold!" exclaimed the Earl of Hereford. "Curses on the knaves!"

"And the lithsmen of London," cried a Saxon thegn, "are all on his side, and marching already through the gates."

"Pause yet," whispered Stigand; "and who shall say, this hour to-morrow, if Edward or Godwin reign on the throne of Alfred?"

His stern heart moved by the distress of his King, and not the less for the unwonted firmness which Edward displayed, Siward here approached, knelt, and took the King's hand.

"Siward can give no niddering counsel to his King; to save the blood of his subjects is never a king's disgrace. Yield thou to mercy, Godwin to the law!"

"Oh for the cowl and cell!" exclaimed the Prince, wringing his hands. "Oh Norman home, why did I leave thee?"

He took the cross from his breast, contemplated it fixedly, prayed silently but with fervour, and his face again became tranquil.

"Go," he said, flinging himself on his seat in the exhaustion that follows passion, "go, Siward, go, Stigand, deal with things mundane as ye will."

The bishop, satisfied with this reluctant acquiescence, seized Siward by the arm and withdrew him from the closet. The captains remained a few moments behind, the Saxons silently gazing on the King, the Normans whispering each other, in great doubt and trouble, and darting looks of the bitterest scorn at their feeble benefactor. Then, as with one accord, these last rushed along the corridor, gained the hall where their countrymen yet assembled, and exclaimed, "*A toute bride! Franc étrier!*—All is lost but life!—God for the first man,—knife and cord for the last!"

Then, as the cry of fire, or as the first crash of an earthquake, dissolves all union, and reduces all emotion into one thought of self-saving, the whole conclave, crowding pell-mell on each other, bustled, jostled, clamoured to the door—happy he who could find horse, palfrey,—even monk's mule! This way, that way, fled those lordly Normans, those martial abbots, those mitred bishops — some singly, some in pairs; some by tens, and some by scores; but all prudently shunning association with those chiefs whom they had most courted the day before, and who, they now knew, would be the main mark for revenge; save only two, who yet, from that awe of the spiritual power which characterised the Norman, who was already half monk, half soldier (Crusader and Templar before Crusades were yet preached, or the Templars yet dreamed of), —even in that hour of selfish panic rallied round them the prowest chivalry of their countrymen, viz., the Bishop of London and the Archbishop of Canterbury. Both these dignitaries, armed *cap-à-pie*, and spear in

hand, headed the flight; and good service that day, both as guide and champion, did Mallet de Graville. He led them in a circuit behind both armies, but being intercepted by a new body, coming from the pastures of Hertfordshire to the help of Godwin, he was compelled to take the bold and desperate resort of entering the city gates. These were wide open; whether to admit the Saxon Earls, or vomit forth their allies, the Londoners. Through these, up the narrow streets, riding three abreast, dashed the slaughtering fugitives; worthy in flight of their national renown, they trampled down every obstacle. Bodies of men drew up against them at every angle, with the Saxon cry of "Out—Out!" "Down with the outland men!" Through each, spear pierced, and sword clove, the way. Red with gore was the spear of the prelate of London; broken to the hilt was the sword militant in the terrible hand of the Archbishop of Canterbury. So on they rode, so on they slaughtered—gained the Eastern Gate, and passed with but two of their number lost.

The fields once gained, for better precaution they separated. Some few, not quite ignorant of the Saxon tongue, doffed their mail, and crept through forest and fell towards the sea-shore; others retained steed and arms, but shunned equally the high roads. The two prelates were among the last; they gained, in safety, Ness, in Essex, threw themselves into an open, crazy, fishing-boat, committed themselves to the waves, and, half drowned and half famished, drifted over the Channel to the French shores. Of the rest of the courtly foreigners, some took refuge in the forts yet held by their countrymen; some lay concealed in creeks and caves till they could find or steal boats

for their passage. And thus, in the year of our Lord 1052, occurred the notable dispersion and ignominious flight of the counts and vavasours of great William the Duke!

CHAPTER III

The Witana-gemot was assembled in the great hall of Westminster in all its imperial pomp.

It was on his throne that the King sate now—and it was the sword that was in his right hand. Some seated below, and some standing beside, the throne, were the officers of the Basileus [1] of Britain. There were to be seen camararius and pincerna, chamberlain and cupbearer; disc thegn and hors thegn; [2] the thegn of the dishes, and the thegn of the stud; with many more, whose state offices may not impossibly have been borrowed from the ceremonial pomp of the Byzantine court; for Edgar, King of England, had in the old time styled himself the Heir of Constantine. Next to these sat the clerks of the chapel, with the King's confessor at their head. Officers were they of higher note than their name bespeaks, and wielders, in the trust of the Great Seal, of a power unknown of old, and now obnoxious to the Saxon. For tedious is the suit which lingers for the king's writ and the king's seal; and from those clerks shall arise hereafter a thing of torture and of might, which shall grind out the hearts of men, and be called CHANCERY! [3]

[1] The title of Basileus was retained by our kings so late as the time of John, who styled himself "Totius Insulæ Britannicæ Basileus."—AGARD: *On the Antiquity of Shires in England, ap. Hearne, Cur. Disc.* [2] Sharon Turner.

[3] See the Introduction to PALGRAVE'S *History of the Anglo-Saxons,* from which this description of the Witan is borrowed

Below the scribes, a space was left on the floor, and farther down sat the chiefs of the Witan. Of these, first in order, both from their spiritual rank and their vast temporal possessions, sat the lords of the Church; the chairs of the prelates of London and Canterbury were void. But still goodly was the array of Saxon mitres, with the harsh, hungry, but intelligent face of Stigand,—Stigand the stout and the covetous; and the benign but firm features of Alred, true priest and true patriot, distinguished amidst all. Around each prelate, as stars round a sun, were his own special priestly retainers, selected from his diocese. Farther still down the hall are the great civil lords and vice-king vassals of the "Lord-Paramount." Vacant the chair of the King of the Scots, for Siward hath not yet had his wish; Macbeth is in his fastnesses, or listening to the weird sisters in the wold; and Malcolm is a fugitive in the halls of the Northumbrian earl. Vacant the chair of the hero Gryffyth, son of Llewelyn, the dread of the marches, Prince of Gwyned, whose arms had subjugated all Cymry. But there are the lesser sub-kings of Wales, true to the immemorial schisms amongst themselves, which destroyed the realm of Ambrosius, and rendered vain the arm of Arthur. With their torques of gold, and wild eyes, and hair cut round ears and brow,[1] they stare on the scene.

On the same bench with these sub-kings, distinguished from them by height of stature, and calm collectedness of mien, no less than by their caps of main-

so largely, that I am left without other apology for the plagiarism, than the frank confession, that if I could have found in others, or conceived from my own resources, a description half as graphic and half as accurate, I would only have plagiarised to half the extent I have done.

[1] Girald. Gambrensis.

tenance and furred robes, are those props of strong thrones and terrors of weak—the earls to whom shires and counties fall, as hyde and carricate to the lesser thegns. But three of these were then present, and all three the foes of Godwin,—Siward, Earl of Northumbria; Leofric of Mercia (that Leofric whose wife Godiva yet lives in ballad and song); and Rolf, Earl of Hereford and Worcestershire, who, strong in his claim of "king's blood," left not the court with his Norman friends. And on the same benches, though a little apart, are the lesser earls, and that higher order of thegns, called king's thegns.

Not far from these sat the chosen citizens from the free burgh of London, already of great weight in the senate,[1]—sufficing often to turn its counsels; all friends were they of the English Earl and his house. In the same division of the hall were found the bulk and true popular part of the meeting—popular indeed—as representing not the people, but the things the people most prized—valour and wealth; the thegn landowners, called in the old deeds the "Ministers:" they sate with swords by their side, all of varying birth, fortune, and connection, whether with king, earl, or ceorl. For in the different districts of the old Heptarchy, the qualification varied; high in East Anglia, low in Wessex; so that what was wealth in the one shire was poverty in the other. There sate, half a yeoman, the Saxon thegn of Berkshire or Dorset, proud of his five hydes of land; there, half an ealderman, the Danish thegn of Norfolk or Ely, discontented with his forty;

[1] Palgrave omits, I presume accidentally, these members of the Witan, but it is clear from the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* that the London "lithsmen" were represented in the great National Witans, and helped to decide the election even of kings.

some were there in right of smaller offices under the crown; some traders, and sons of traders, for having crossed the high seas three times at their own risk; some could boast the blood of Offa and Egbert; and some traced but three generations back to neatherd and ploughman; and some were Saxons and some were Danes: and some from the western shires were by origin Britons, though little cognisant of their race. Farther down still, at the extreme end of the hall, crowding by the open doors, filling up the space without, were the ceorls themselves, a vast and not powerless body; in these high courts (distinct from the shire gemots, or local senates)—never called upon to vote or to speak or to act, or even to sign names to the doom, but only to shout "Yea, yea," when the proceres pronounced their sentence. Yet not powerless were they, but rather to the Witan what public opinion is to the Witan's successor, our modern parliament: they *were* opinion! And according to their numbers and their sentiments, easily known and boldly murmured, often and often must that august court of basileus and prelate, vassal-king and mighty earl, have shaped the council and adjudged the doom.

And the forms of the meeting had been duly said and done; and the King had spoken words no doubt wary and peaceful, gracious and exhortatory; but those words—for his voice that day was weak—travelled not beyond the small circle of his clerks and his officers; and a murmur buzzed through the hall, when Earl Godwin stood on the floor with his six sons at his back; and you might have heard the hum of the gnat that vexed the smooth cheek of Earl Rolf, or the click of the spider from the web on the vaulted roof, the moment before Earl Godwin spoke.

"If," said he, with the modest look and downcast eye of practised eloquence, "if I rejoice once more to breathe the air of England, in whose service, often perhaps with faulty deeds, but at all times with honest thoughts, I have, both in war and council, devoted so much of my life that little now remains—but (should you, my king, and you, prelates, proceres, and ministers so vouchsafe) to look round and select that spot of my native soil which shall receive my bones;—if I rejoice to stand once more in that assembly which has often listened to my voice when our common country was in peril, who here will blame that joy? Who among my foes, if foes now I have, will not respect the old man's gladness? Who amongst you, earls and thegns, would not grieve, if his duty bade him say to the grey-haired exile, 'In this English air you shall not breathe your last sigh—on this English soil you shall not find a grave!' Who amongst you would not grieve to say it?" (Suddenly he drew up his head and faced his audience.) "Who amongst you hath the courage and the heart to say it? Yes, I rejoice that I am at last in an assembly fit to judge my cause, and pronounce my innocence. For what offence was I outlawed? For what offence were I, and the six sons I have given to my land, to bear the wolf's penalty, and be chased and slain as the wild beasts? Hear me, and answer!

"Eustace, Count of Boulogne, returning to his domains from a visit to our lord the King, entered the town of Dover in mail and on his war steed; his train did the same. Unknowing our laws and customs (for I desire to press light upon all old grievances, and will impute ill designs to none) these foreigners invade by force the private dwellings of citizens, and there select

their quarters. Ye all know that this was the strongest violation of Saxon right; ye know that the meanest ceorl hath the proverb on his lip, 'Every man's house is his castle.' One of the townsmen acting on this belief,—which I have yet to learn was a false one,—expelled from his threshold a retainer of the French Earl's. The stranger drew his sword and wounded him; blows followed—the stranger fell by the arm he had provoked. The news arrives to Earl Eustace; he and his kinsmen spur to the spot; they murder the Englishman on his hearth-stone.—"

Here a groan, half-stifled and wrathful, broke from the ceorls at the end of the hall. Godwin held up his hand in rebuke of the interruption, and resumed.

"This deed done, the outlanders rode through the streets with their drawn swords; they butchered those who came in their way; they trampled even children under their horses' feet. The burghers armed. I thank the Divine Father, who gave me for my countrymen those gallant burghers! They fought, as we English know how to fight; they slew some nineteen or score of these mailed intruders; they chased them from the town. Earl Eustace fled fast. Earl Eustace, we know, is a wise man: small rest took he, little bread broke he, till he pulled rein at the gate of Gloucester, where my lord the King then held court. He made his complaint. My lord the King, naturally hearing but one side, thought the burghers in the wrong; and, scandalised that such high persons of his own kith should be so aggrieved, he sent for me, in whose government the burgh of Dover is, and bade me chastise, by military execution, those who had attacked the foreign Count. I appeal to the great Earls whom I see before me—to you, illustrious Leofric; to you,

renowned Siward—what value would ye set on your earldoms, if ye had not the heart and the power to see right done to the dwellers therein?

"What was the course I proposed? Instead of martial execution, which would involve the whole burgh in one sentence, I submitted that the reeve and gerefas of the burgh should be cited to appear before the King, and account for the broil. My lord, though ever most clement and loving to his good people, either unhappily moved against me, or overswayed by the foreigners, was counselled to reject this mode of doing justice, which our laws, as settled under Edgar and Canute, enjoin. And because I would not,—and I say in the presence of all, because I, Godwin, son of Wolnoth, *durst* not, if I would, have entered the free burgh of Dover with mail on my back and the doomsman at my right hand, these outlanders induced my lord the King to summon me to attend in person (as for a sin of my own) the council of the Witan, convened at Gloucester, then filled with the foreigners, not, as I humbly opined, to do justice to me and my folk of Dover, but to secure to this Count of Boulogne a triumph over English liberties, and sanction his scorn for the value of English lives.

"I hesitated, and was menaced with outlawry; I armed in self-defence, and in defence of the laws of England; I armed, that men might not be murdered on their hearth-stones, nor children trampled under the hoofs of a stranger's war-steed. My lord the King gathered his troops round 'the cross and the martlets.' Yon noble earls, Siward and Leofric, came to that standard, as (knowing not then my cause) was their duty to the Basileus of Britain. But when they knew my cause, and saw *with* me the dwellers of the

land, *against* me the outland aliens, they righteously interposed. An armistice was concluded; I agreed to refer all matters to a Witan held where it is held this day. My troops were disbanded; but the foreigners induced my lord not only to retain his own, but to issue his Herr-bann for the gathering of hosts far and near, even allies beyond the seas. When I looked to London for the peaceful Witan, what saw I? The largest armament that had been collected in this reign —that armament headed by Norman knights. Was this the meeting where justice could be done mine and me? Nevertheless, what was my offer? That I and my six sons would attend, provided the usual sureties, agreeable to our laws, from which only thieves[1] are excluded, were given that we should come and go life-free and safe. Twice this offer was made, twice refused; and so I and my sons were banished. We went;—we have returned!"

"And in arms," murmured Earl Rolf, son-in-law to that Count Eustace of Boulogne, whose violence had been temperately and truly narrated.[2]

"And in arms," repeated Godwin: "true; in arms against the foreigners who had thus poisoned the ear of our gracious King; in arms, Earl Rolf; and at the first clash of those arms, Franks and foreigners have fled. We have no need of arms now. We are amongst our countrymen, and no Frenchman interposes between us and the ever gentle, ever generous nature of our born King.

"Peers and proceres, chiefs of this Witan, perhaps the largest ever yet assembled in man's memory, it is

[1] By Athelstan's law, every man was to have peace going to and from the Witan, unless he was a thief.—WILKINS, p. 137.

[2] Goda, Edward's sister, married first Rolf's father, Count of Mantes; secondly, the Count of Boulogne.

for you to decide whether I and mine, or the foreign fugitives, caused the dissensions in these realms; whether our banishment was just or not; whether in our return we have abused the power we possessed. Ministers, on those swords by your sides there is not one drop of blood! At all events, in submitting to you our fate, we submit to our own laws and our own race. I am here to clear myself, on my oath, of deed and thought of treason. There are amongst my peers as king's thegns, those who will attest the same on my behalf, and prove the facts I have stated, if they are not sufficiently notorious. As for my sons, no crime can be alleged against them, unless it be a crime to have in their veins that blood which flows in mine—blood which they have learned from me to shed in defence of that beloved land to which they now ask to be recalled."

The Earl ceased and receded behind his children, having artfully, by his very abstinence from the more heated eloquence imputed to him often as a fault and a wile, produced a powerful effect upon an audience already prepared for his acquittal.

But now as, from the sons, Sweyn the eldest stepped forth, with a wandering eye and uncertain foot, there was a movement like a shudder amongst the large majority of the audience, and a murmur of hate or of horror.

The young Earl marked the sensation his presence produced, and stopped short. His breath came thick; he raised his right hand, but spoke not. His voice died on his lips; his eyes roved wildly round with a haggard stare more imploring than defying. Then rose, in his episcopal stole, Alred the bishop, and his clear sweet voice trembled as he spoke.

"Comes Sweyn, son of Godwin, here to prove his innocence of treason against the King?—if so, let him hold his peace; for if the Witan acquit Godwin, son of Wolnoth, of that charge, the acquittal includes his House. But in the name of the holy Church here represented by its fathers, will Sweyn say, and fasten his word by oath, that he is guiltless of treason to the King of Kings—guiltless of sacrilege that my lips shrink to name? Alas, that the duty falls on me,—for I loved thee once, and love thy kindred now. But I am God's servant before all things"—the prelate paused, and gathering up new energy, added in unfaltering accents, "I charge thee here, Sweyn the outlaw, that, moved by the fiend, thou didst bear off from God's house and violate a daughter of the Church—Algive, Abbess of Leominster!"

"And I," cried Siward, rising to the full height of his stature, "I, in the presence of these proceres, whose proudest title is *milites* or warriors—I charge Sweyn, son of Godwin, that, not in open field and hand to hand, but by felony and guile, he wrought the foul and abhorrent murder of his cousin, Beorn the Earl!"

At these two charges from men so eminent, the effect upon the audience was startling. While those not influenced by Godwin raised their eyes, sparkling with wrath and scorn, upon the wasted, yet still noble face of the eldest born, even those most zealous on behalf of that popular House evinced no sympathy for its heir. Some looked down abashed and mournful—some regarded the accused with a cold, unpitying gaze. Only perhaps among the ceorls, at the end of the hall, might be seen some compassion on anxious faces; for before those deeds of crime had been bruited

abroad, none among the sons of Godwin more blithe of mien and bold of hand, more honoured and beloved, than Sweyn the outlaw. But the hush that succeeded the charges was appalling in its depth. Godwin himself shaded his face with his mantle, and only those close by could see that his breast heaved and his limbs trembled. The brothers had shrunk from the side of the accused, outlawed even amongst his kin—all save Harold, who, strong in his blameless name and beloved repute, advanced three strides, amidst the silence, and, standing by his brother's side, lifted his commanding brow above the seated judges, but he did not speak.

Then said Sweyn the Earl, strengthened by such solitary companionship in that hostile assemblage,—"I might answer that for these charges in the past, for deeds alleged as done eight long years ago, I have the King's grace, and the inlaw's right; and that in the Witans over which I as earl presided, no man was twice judged for the same offence. That I hold to be the law, in the great councils as the small."

"It is! it is!" exclaimed Godwin: his paternal feelings conquering his prudence and his decorous dignity. "Hold to it, my son!"

"I hold to it not," resumed the young earl, casting a haughty glance over the somewhat blank and disappointed faces of his foes, "for my law is *here*"—and he smote his heart—"and that condemns me not once alone, but evermore! Alred, O holy father, at whose knees I once confessed my every sin,—I blame thee not that thou first, in the Witan, liftest thy voice against me, though thou knowest that I loved Algive from youth upward; she, with her heart yet mine, was given in the last year of Hardicanute, when might was

right, to the Church. I met her again, flushed with my victories over the Walloon kings, with power in my hand and passion in my veins. Deadly was my sin!—But what asked I? that vows compelled should be annulled; that the love of my youth might yet be the wife of my manhood. Pardon, that I knew not then how eternal are the bonds ye of the Church have woven round those of whom, if ye fail of saints, ye may at least make martyrs!"

He paused, and his lip curled, and his eye shot wild fire; for in that moment his mother's blood was high within him, and he looked and thought, perhaps, as some heathen Dane, but the flash of the former man was momentary, and humbly smiting his breast, he murmured,—"Avaunt, Satan!—yea, deadly was my sin! And the sin was mine alone; Algive, if stained, was blameless; she escaped—and—and died!

"The King was wroth; and first to strive against my pardon was Harold my brother, who now alone in my penitence stands by my side: he strove manfully and openly; I blamed *him* not: but Beorn, my cousin, desired my earldom, and he strove against me, wilily and in secret,—to my face kind, behind my back despiteful. I detected his falsehood, and meant to detain, but not to slay him. He lay bound in my ship; he reviled and he taunted me in the hour of my gloom; and when the blood of the sea-kings flowed in fire through my veins. And I lifted my axe in ire; and my men lifted theirs, and so,—and so!—Again I say —Deadly was my sin!

"Think not that I seek now to make less my guilt, as I sought when I deemed that life was yet long, and power was yet sweet. Since then I have known worldly evil, and worldly good,—the storm and the

shine of life; I have swept the seas, a sea-king; I have battled with the Dane in his native land; I have almost grasped in my right hand, as I grasped in my dreams, the crown of my kinsman, Canute; — again, I have been a fugitive and an exile;—again, I have been inlawed, and Earl of all the lands from Isis to the Wye.[1] And whether in state or in penury,—whether in war or in peace, I have seen the pale face of the nun betrayed, and the gory wounds of the murdered man. Wherefore I come not here to plead for a pardon, which would console me not, but formally to dissever my kinsmen's cause from mine, which alone sullies and degrades it;—I come here to say, that, coveting not your acquittal, fearing not your judgment, I pronounce mine own doom. Cap of noble, and axe of warrior, I lay aside for ever; barefooted, and alone, I go hence to the Holy Sepulchre; there to assoil my soul, and implore that grace which cannot come from man! Harold, step forth in the place of Sweyn the first-born! And ye prelates and peers, milites and ministers, proceed to adjudge the living! To you, and to England, he who now quits you is the dead!"

He gathered his robe of state over his breast as a monk his gown, and looking neither to right nor to left, passed slowly down the hall, through the crowd, which made way for him in awe and silence; and it seemed to the assembly as if a cloud had gone from the face of day.

And Godwin still stood with his face covered by his robe.

And Harold anxiously watched the faces of the assembly, and saw no relenting.

[1] More correctly of Oxford, Somerset, Berkshire, Gloucester, and Hereford.

And Gurth crept to Harold's side.
And the gay Leofwine looked sad.
And the young Wolnoth turned pale and trembled.
And the fierce Tostig played with his golden chain.
And one low sob was heard, and it came from the breast of Alred the meek accuser,—God's firm but gentle priest.

CHAPTER IV

This memorable trial ended, as the reader will have foreseen, in the formal renewal of Sweyn's outlawry, and the formal restitution of the Earl Godwin and his other sons to their lands and honours, with declarations imputing all the blame of the late dissensions to the foreign favourites, and sentences of banishment against them, except only, by way of a bitter mockery, some varlets of low degree, such as Humphrey Cock's-foot, and Richard son of Scrob.[1]

The return to power of this able and vigorous family was attended with an instantaneous effect upon the long-relaxed strings of the imperial government. Macbeth heard, and trembled in his moors; Gryffyth of Wales lit the fire-beacon on moel and craig. Earl Rolf was banished, but merely as a nominal concession to public opinion; his kinship to Edward sufficed

[1] Yet how little safe it is for the great to despise the low-born. This very Richard, son of Scrob, more euphoniously styled by the Normans Richard Fitz-Scrob, settled in Herefordshire (he was probably among the retainers of Earl Rolf), and on William's landing, became the chief and most active supporter of the invader in those districts. The sentence of banishment seems to have been mainly confined to the foreigners about the Court—for it is clear that many Norman landowners and priests were still left scattered throughout the country.

to restore him soon, not only to England, but to the lordship of the Marches, and thither was he sent, with adequate force, against the Welch, who had half-repossessed themselves of the borders they harried. Saxon prelates and abbots replaced the Norman fugitives; and all were contented with the revolution, save the King, for the King lost his Norman friends, and regained his English wife.

In conformity with the usages of the times, hostages of the loyalty and faith of Godwin were required and conceded. They were selected from his own family; and the choice fell on Wolnoth, his son, and Haco, the son of Sweyn. As, when nearly all England may be said to have repassed to the hands of Godwin, it would have been an idle precaution to consign these hostages to the keeping of Edward, it was settled, after some discussion, that they should be placed in the Court of the Norman Duke until such time as the King, satisfied with the good faith of the family, should authorise their recall:—Fatal hostage, fatal ward and host!

It was some days after this national crisis, and order and peace were again established in city and land, forest and shire, when, at the setting of the sun, Hilda stood alone by the altar-stone of Thor.

The orb was sinking red and lurid, amidst long cloud-wracks of vermeil and purple, and not one human form was seen in the landscape, save that tall and majestic figure by the Runic shrine and the Druid crommell. She was leaning both hands on her wand, or seid-staff, as it was called in the language of Scandinavian superstition, and bending slightly forward as in the attitude of listening or expectation. Long before any form appeared on the road below she seemed

to be aware of coming footsteps, and probably her habits of life had sharpened her senses; for she smiled, muttered to herself, "Ere it sets!" and changing her posture, leant her arm on the altar, and rested her face upon her hand.

At length, two figures came up the road; they neared the hill; they saw her, and slowly ascended the knoll. The one was dressed in the serge of a pilgrim, and his cowl thrown back, showed the face where human beauty and human power lay ravaged and ruined by human passions. He upon whom the pilgrim lightly leaned was attired simply, without the brooch or bracelet common to thegns of high degree, yet his port was that of majesty, and his brow that of mild command. A greater contrast could not be conceived than that between these two men, yet united by a family likeness. For the countenance of the last described was, though sorrowful at that moment, and indeed habitually not without a certain melancholy, wonderfully imposing from its calm and sweetness. There, no devouring passions had left the cloud or ploughed the line; but all the smooth loveliness of youth took dignity from the conscious resolve of men. The long hair, of a fair brown, with a slight tinge of gold, as the last sunbeams shot through its luxuriance, was parted from the temples, and fell in large waves half way to the shoulder. The eyebrows, darker in hue, arched and finely traced; the straight features, not less manly than the Norman, but less strongly marked: the cheek, hardy with exercise and exposure, yet still retaining somewhat of youthful bloom under the pale bronze of its sunburnt surface: the form tall, not gigantic, and vigorous rather from perfect proportion and athletic habits than from breadth and bulk—were

all singularly characteristic of the Saxon beauty in its highest and purest type. But what chiefly distinguished this personage, was that peculiar dignity, so simple, so sedate, which no pomp seems to dazzle, no danger to disturb; and which perhaps arises from a strong sense of self-dependence, and is connected with self-respect—a dignity common to the Indian and the Arab, and rare except in that state of society in which each man is a power in himself. The Latin tragic poet touches close upon that sentiment in the fine lines—

"Rex est qui metuit nihil;
Hoc regnum sibi quisque dat." [1]

So stood the brothers, Sweyn the outlaw and Harold the Earl, before the reputed prophetess. She looked on both with a steady eye, which gradually softened almost into tenderness, as it finally rested upon the pilgrim.

"And is it thus," she said at last, "that I see the first-born of Godwin the fortunate, for whom so often I have tasked the thunder, and watched the setting sun? for whom my runes have been graven on the bark of the elm, and the Scin-læca [2] been called in pale splendour from the graves of the dead?"

"Hilda," said Sweyn, "not now will I accuse thee of the seeds thou hast sown: the harvest is gathered and the sickle is broken. Abjure thy dark Galdra,[3] and turn as I to the sole light in the future, which shines from the tomb of the Son Divine."

[1] SENECA, *Thyest.* Act ii.—"He is a king who fears nothing; that kingdom every man gives to himself."

[2] Scin-læca, literally a shining corpse; a species of apparition invoked by the witch or wizard.—See SHARON TURNER on *The Superstitions of the Anglo-Saxons,* b. ii. c. 14.

[3] *Galdra,* magic.

The Prophetess bowed her head and replied:

"Belief cometh as the wind. Can the tree say to the wind, 'Rest thou on my boughs,' or Man to Belief, 'Fold thy wings on my heart'? Go where thy soul can find comfort, for thy life hath passed from its use on earth. And when I would read thy fate, the runes are as blanks, and the wave sleeps unstirred on the fountain. Go where the Fylgia,[1] whom Alfader gives to each at his birth, leads thee. Thou didst desire love that seemed shut from thee, and I predicted that thy love should awake from the charnel in which the creed that succeeds to the faith of our sires inters life in its bloom. And thou didst covet the fame of the Jarl and the Viking, and I blessed thine axe to thy hand, and wove the sail for thy masts. So long as man knows *desire*, can Hilda have power over his doom. But when the heart lies in ashes, I raise but a corpse, that at the hush of the charm falls again into its grave. Yet, come to me nearer, O Sweyn, whose cradle I rocked to the chant of my rhyme."

The outlaw turned aside his face, and obeyed.

She sighed as she took his passive hand in her own, and examined the lines on the palm. Then, as if by an involuntary impulse of fondness and pity, she put aside his cowl and kissed his brow.

"Thy skein is spun, and happier than the many who scorn, and the few who lament thee, thou shalt win where they lose. The steel shall not smite thee, the storm shall forbear thee, the goal that thou yearnest for thy steps shall attain. Night hallows the ruin, —and peace to the shattered wrecks of the brave!"

The outlaw heard as if unmoved. But when he

[1] *Fylgia,* tutelary divinity. See Note (H), at the end of the volume.

turned to Harold, who covered his face with his hand, but could not restrain the tears that flowed through the clasped fingers, a moisture came into his own wild, bright eyes, and he said, "Now, my brother, farewell, for no farther step shalt thou wend with me."

Harold started, opened his arms, and the outlaw fell upon his breast.

No sound was heard save a single sob, and so close was breast to breast, that you could not say from whose heart it came. Then the outlaw wrenched himself from the embrace, and murmured, "And Haco —my son—motherless, fatherless—hostage in the land of the stranger! Thou wilt remember—thou wilt shield him; thou be to him mother, father in the days to come! So may the saints bless thee!" With these words he sprang down the hillock.

Harold bounded after him; but Sweyn, halting, said, mournfully, "Is this thy promise? Am I so lost that faith should be broken even with thy father's son?"

At that touching rebuke, Harold paused, and the outlaw passed his way alone. As the last glimpse of his figure vanished at the turn of the road, whence, on the second of May, the Norman Duke and the Saxon King had emerged side by side, the short twilight closed abruptly, and up from the far forestland rose the moon.

Harold stood rooted to the spot, and still gazing on the space, when the Vala laid her hand on his arm.

"Behold, as the moon rises on the troubled gloaming, so rises the fate of Harold, as yon brief, human shadow, halting between light and darkness, passes away to night. Thou art now the first-born of a House that unites the hopes of the Saxon with the fortunes of the Dane."

"Thinkest thou," said Harold, with a stern composure, "that I can have joy and triumph in a brother's exile and woe?"

"Not now, and not yet, will the voice of thy true nature be heard; but the warmth of the sun brings the thunder, and the glory of fortune wakes the storm of the soul."

"Kinswoman," said Harold, with a slight curl of his lip, "by me at least have thy prophecies ever passed as the sough of the air; neither in horror nor with faith do I think of thy incantations and charms; and I smile alike at the exorcism of the shaveling and the spells of the Saga. I have asked thee not to bless mine axe, nor weave my sail. No runic rhyme is on the sword-blade of Harold. I leave my fortunes to the chance of mine own cool brain and strong arm. Vala, between thee and me there is no bond."

The Prophetess smiled loftily.

"And what thinkest thou, O self-dependent! what thinkest thou is the fate which thy brain and thine arm shall win?"

"The fate they have won already. I see no Beyond. The fate of a man sworn to guard his country, love justice, and do right."

The moon shone full on the heroic face of the young Earl as he spoke; and on its surface there seemed nought to belie the noble words. Yet, the Prophetess, gazing earnestly on that fair countenance, said, in a whisper, that, despite a reason singularly sceptical for the age in which it had been cultured, thrilled to the Saxon's heart, "Under that calm eye sleeps the soul of thy sire, and beneath that brow, so haught and so pure, works the genius that crowned the kings of the north in the lineage of thy mother the Dane."

"Peace!" said Harold, almost fiercely; then, as if ashamed of the weakness of his momentary irritation, he added, with a faint smile, "Let us not talk of these matters while my heart is still sad and away from the thoughts of the world, with my brother the lonely outlaw. Night is on us, and the ways are yet unsafe; for the king's troops, disbanded in haste, were made up of many who turn to robbers in peace. Alone, and unarmed, save my ateghar, I would crave a night's rest under thy roof; and"—he hesitated, and as light blush came over his cheek—"and I would fain see if your grandchild is as fair as when I last looked on her blue eyes, that then wept for Harold ere he went into exile."

"Her tears are not at her command, nor her smiles," said the Vala, solemnly; "her tears flow from the fount of thy sorrows, and her smiles are the beams from thy joys. For know, O Harold! that Edith is thine earthly Fylgia; thy fate and her fate are as one. And vainly as man would escape from his shadow, would soul wrench itself from the soul that Skulda hath linked to his doom."

Harold made no reply; but his step, habitually slow, grew more quick and light, and this time his reason found no fault with the oracles of the Vala.

CHAPTER V

As Hilda entered the hall, the various idlers accustomed to feed at her cost were about retiring, some to their homes in the vicinity, some, appertaining to the household, to the dormitories in the old Roman villa.

It was not the habit of the Saxon noble, as it was of the Norman, to put hospitality to profit, by regarding his guests in the light of armed retainers. Liberal as the Briton, the cheer of the board and the shelter of the roof were afforded with a hand equally unselfish and indiscriminate; and the doors of the more wealthy and munificent might be almost literally said to stand open from morn to eve.

As Harold followed the Vala across the vast atrium, his face was recognised, and a shout of enthusiastic welcome greeted the popular Earl. The only voices that did not swell that cry were those of three monks from a neighbouring convent, who chose to wink at the supposed practices of the Morthwyrtha,[1] from the affection they bore to her ale and mead, and the gratitude they felt for her ample gifts to their convent.

"One of the wicked House, brother," whispered the monk.

"Yea; mockers and scorners are Godwin and his lewd sons," answered the monk.

And all three sighed and scowled, as the door closed on the hostess and her stately guest.

Two tall and not ungraceful lamps lighted the same chamber in which Hilda was first presented to the reader. The handmaids were still at their spindles, and the white web nimbly shot as the mistress entered. She paused, and her brow knit, as she eyed the work.

"But three parts done?" she said, "weave fast, and weave strong."

Harold, not heeding the maids or their task, gazed inquiringly round, and from a nook near the window, Edith sprang forward with a joyous cry, and a face all glowing with delight—sprang forward, as if to the

[1] *Morthwyrtha,* worshipper of the dead.

arms of a brother; but, within a step or so of that noble guest, she stopped short, and her eyes fell to the ground.

Harold held his breath in admiring silence. The child he had loved from her cradle stood before him as a woman. Even since we last saw her, in the interval between the spring and the autumn, the year had ripened the youth of the maiden, as it had mellowed the fruits of the earth; and her cheek was rosy with the celestial blush, and her form rounded to the nameless grace, which say that infancy is no more.

He advanced and took her hand, but for the first time in his life in their greetings, he neither gave nor received the kiss.

"You are no child now, Edith," said he, involuntarily; "but still set apart, I pray you, some remains of the old childish love for Harold."

Edith's charming lips smiled softly; she raised her eyes to his, and their innocent fondness spoke through happy tears.

But few words passed in the short interval between Harold's entrance and his retirement to the chamber prepared for him in haste. Hilda herself led him to a rude ladder which admitted to a room above, evidently added, by some Saxon lord, to the old Roman pile. The ladder showed the precaution of one accustomed to sleep in the midst of peril; for, by a kind of windlass in the room, it could be drawn up at the inmate's will, and, so drawn, left below a dark and deep chasm, delving down to the foundations of the house; nevertheless the room itself had all the luxury of the time; the bedstead was quaintly carved, and of some rare wood; a trophy of arms—though very an-

cient, sedulously polished—hung on the wall. There were the small round shield and spear of the earlier Saxon, with his visorless helm, and the short curved knife or sæx,[1] from which some antiquarians deem that the Saxish men take their renowned name.

Edith, following Hilda, proffered to the guest, on a salver of gold, spiced wines and confections; while Hilda, silently and unperceived, waved her seid staff over the bed, and rested her pale hand on the pillow.

"Nay, sweet cousin," said Harold, smiling, "this is not one of the fashions of old, but rather, methinks, borrowed from the Frankish manners in the court of King Edward."

"Not so, Harold," answered Hilda, quickly turning; "such was ever the ceremony due to Saxon king, when he slept in a subject's house, ere our kinsmen the Danes introduced that unroyal wassail, which left subject and king unable to hold or to quaff cup, when the board was left for the bed."

"Thou rebukest, O Hilda, too tauntingly, the pride of Godwin's house, when thou givest to his homely son the ceremonial of a king. But, so served, I envy not kings, fair Edith."

He took the cup, raised it to his lips, and when he placed it on the small table by his side the women had left the chamber, and he was alone. He stood for some minutes absorbed in reverie, and his soliloquy ran somewhat thus:

"Why said the Vala that Edith's fate was inwoven

[1] It is a disputed question whether the sæx of the earliest Saxon invaders was a long or short curved weapon,—nay, whether it was curved or straight; but the author sides with those who contend that it was a short, crooked weapon, easily concealed by a cloak, and similar to those depicted on the banner of the East Saxons.

with mine? And why did I believe and bless the Vala, when she so said? Can Edith ever be my wife? The monk-king designs her for the cloister—Woe, and well-a-day! — Sweyn, Sweyn, let thy doom forewarn me! And if I stand up in my place and say, 'Give age and grief to the cloister—youth and delight to man's hearth,' what will answer the monks? 'Edith cannot be thy wife, son of Godwin, for faint and scarce traced though your affinity of blood, ye are within the banned degrees of the Church. Edith may be wife to another, if thou wilt,—barren spouse of the Church or mother of children who lisp not Harold's name as their father.' Out on these priests with their mummeries, and out on their war upon human hearts!"

His fair brow grew stern and fierce as the Norman Duke's in his ire; and had you seen him at the moment you would have seen the true brother of Sweyn. He broke from his thoughts with the strong effort of a man habituated to self-control, and advanced to the narrow window, opened the lattice, and looked out.

The moon was in all her splendour. The long deep shadows of the breathless forest checkered the silvery whiteness of open sward and intervening glade. Ghostly arose on the knoll before him the grey columns of the mystic Druid,—dark and indistinct the bloody altar of the Warrior god. But there his eye was arrested; for whatever is least distinct and defined in a landscape has the charm that is the strongest; and, while he gazed, he thought that a pale phosphoric light broke from the mound with the bautastein, that rose by the Teuton altar. He *thought*, for he was not sure that it was not some cheat of the fancy... Gazing still, in the centre of that light there appeared to

gleam forth, for one moment, a form of superhuman height. It was the form of a man, that seemed clad in arms like those on the wall, leaning on a spear, whose point was lost behind the shafts of the crommell. And the face grew in that moment distinct from the light which shimmered around it, a face large as some early god's, but stamped with unutterable and solemn woe. He drew back a step, passed his hand over his eyes, and looked again. Light and figure alike had vanished; nought was seen save the grey columns and dim fane. The Earl's lip curved in derision of his weakness. He closed the lattice, undressed, knelt for a moment or so by the bedside, and his prayer was brief and simple, nor accompanied with the crossings and signs customary in his age. He rose, extinguished the lamp, and threw himself on the bed.

The moon, thus relieved of the lamp-light, came clear and bright through the room, shone on the trophied arms, and fell upon Harold's face, casting its brightness on the pillow on which the Vala had breathed her charm. And Harold slept—slept long—his face calm, his breathing regular: but ere the moon sunk and the dawn rose the features were dark and troubled, the breath came by gasps, the brow was knit, and the teeth clenched.

BOOK IV

THE HEATHEN ALTAR AND THE SAXON CHURCH

CHAPTER I

While Harold sleeps, let us here pause to survey for the first time the greatness of that House to which Sweyn's exile had left him the heir. The fortunes of Godwin had been those which no man not eminently versed in the science of his kind can achieve. Though the fable which some modern historians of great name have repeated and detailed, as to his early condition as the son of a cow-herd, is utterly groundless,[1] and he belonged to a house all-powerful at the time of his youth, he was unquestionably the builder of his own greatness. That he should rise so high in the early part of his career was less remarkable than that he should have so long continued the possessor of a power and state in reality more than regal.

But, as has been before implied, Godwin's civil capacities were more prominent than his warlike. And this it is which invests him with that peculiar interest which attracts us to those who knit our modern intelligence with the past. In that dim world before the Norman deluge, we are startled to recognise the gifts that ordinarily distinguish a man of peace in a civilised age.

[1] See Note (I), at the end of the volume.

His father, Wolnoth, had been "Childe"[1] of the South Saxons, or thegn of Sussex, a nephew of Edric Streone, Earl of Mercia, the unprincipled but able minister of Ethelred, who betrayed his master to Canute, by whom, according to most authorities, he was righteously, though not very legally, slain as a reward for the treason.

"I promised," said the Dane king, "to set thy head higher than other men's, and I keep my word." The trunkless head was set on the gates of London.

Wolnoth had quarrelled with his uncle Brightric, Edric's brother, and before the arrival of Canute, had betaken himself to the piracy of a sea chief, seduced twenty of the king's ships, plundered the southern coasts, burnt the royal navy, and then his history disappears from the chronicles; but immediately afterwards the great Danish army, called Thurkell's Host, invaded the coast, and kept their chief station on the Thames. Their victorious arms soon placed the country almost at their command. The traitor Edric joined them with a power of more than 10,000 men; and it is probable enough that the ships of Wolnoth had before this time melted amicably into the armament of the Danes. If this, which seems the most likely conjecture, be received, Godwin, then a mere youth, would naturally have commenced his career in the cause of Canute; and as the son of a formidable

[1] *Saxon Chronicle*, Florence Wigorn. Sir F. Palgrave says that the title of Childe is equivalent to that of Atheling. With that remarkable appreciation of evidence which generally makes him so invaluable as a judicial authority where accounts are contradictory, Sir F. Palgrave discards with silent contempt the absurd romance of Godwin's station of herdsman, to which, upon such very fallacious and flimsy authorities, Thierry and Sharon Turner have been betrayed into lending their distinguished names.

chief of thegn's rank, and even as kinsman to Edric, who, whatever his crimes, must have retained a party it was wise to conciliate, Godwin's favour with Canute, whose policy would lead him to show marked distinction to any able Saxon follower, ceases to be surprising.

The son of Wolnoth accompanied Canute in his military expedition to the Scandinavian continent, and here a signal victory, planned by Godwin and executed solely by himself and the Saxon band under his command, without aid from Canute's Danes, made the most memorable military exploit of his life, and confirmed his rising fortunes.

Edric, though he is said to have been low born, had married the sister of King Ethelred; and as Godwin advanced in fame, Canute did not disdain to bestow his own sister in marriage on the eloquent favourite, who probably kept no small portion of the Saxon population to their allegiance. On the death of this, his first wife, who bore him but one son [1] (who died by accident), he found a second spouse in the same royal house; and the mother of his six living sons and two daughters was the niece of his king, and sister of Sweyn, who subsequently filled the throne of Denmark. After the death of Canute, the Saxon's predilections in favour of the Saxon line became apparent; but it was either his policy or his principles always to defer to the popular will as expressed in the national council; and on the preference given by the Witan to Harold the son of Canute over the heirs of Ethelred, he yielded his own inclinations. The great

[1] This first wife Thyra, was of very unpopular repute with the Saxons. She was accused of sending young English persons as slaves into Denmark, and is said to have been killed by lightning.

power of the Danes, and the amicable fusion of their race with the Saxon which had now taken place, are apparent in this decision; for not only did Earl Leofric, of Mercia, though himself a Saxon (as well as the Earl of Northumbria, with the thegns north of the Thames), declare for Harold the Dane, but the citizens of London were of the same party; and Godwin represented little more than the feeling of his own principality of Wessex.

From that time, Godwin, however, became identified with the English cause; and even many who believed him guilty of some share in the murder, or at least the betrayal, of Alfred,[1] Edward's brother, sought excuses in the disgust with which Godwin had regarded the foreign retinue that Alfred had brought with him, as if to owe his throne to Norman swords, rather than to English hearts.

Hardicanute, who succeeded Harold, whose memory he abhorred, whose corpse he disinterred and flung into a fen,[2] had been chosen by the unanimous council both of English and Danish thegns; and despite Hardicanute's first vehement accusations of Godwin, the Earl still remained throughout that reign as powerful as in the two preceding it. When Hardicanute dropped down dead at a marriage banquet, it was Godwin who placed Edward upon the throne; and that great Earl must either have been conscious of his innocence of the murder of Edward's brother, or assured of his own irresponsible power, when he

[1] It is just, however, to Godwin to say, that there is no *proof* of his share in this barbarous transaction; the presumptions, on the contrary, are in his favour; but the authorities are too contradictory, and the whole event too obscure, to enable us unhesitatingly to confirm the acquittal he received in his own age, and from his own national tribunal.

[2] *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle.*

said to the prince who knelt at his feet, and, fearful of the difficulties in his way, implored the Earl to aid his abdication of the throne and return to Normandy:

"You are the son of Ethelred, grandson of Edgar. Reign, it is your duty; better to live in glory than die in exile. You are of mature years, and having known sorrow and need, can better feel for your people. Rely on me, and there will be none of the difficulties you dread; whom I favour, England favours."

And shortly afterwards, in the national assembly, Godwin won Edward his throne. "Powerful in speech, powerful in bringing over people to what he desired, some yielded to his words, some to bribes." [1] Verily, Godwin was a man to have risen as high, had he lived later!

So Edward reigned, and agreeably, it is said, with previous stipulations, married the daughter of his king-maker. Beautiful as Edith the Queen was in mind and in person, Edward apparently loved her not. She dwelt in his palace, his wife only in name.

Tostig (as we have seen) had married the daughter of Baldwin, Count of Flanders, sister to Matilda, wife to the Norman Duke: and thus the House of Godwin was triply allied to princely lineage—the Danish, the Saxon, the Flemish. And Tostig might have said, as in his heart William the Norman said, "My children shall descend from Charlemagne and Alfred."

Godwin's life, though thus outwardly brilliant, was too incessantly passed in public affairs and politic schemes to allow the worldly man much leisure to watch over the nurture and rearing of the bold spirits of his sons. Githa his wife, the Dane, a woman with a haughty but noble spirit, imperfect education,

[1] William of Malmesbury.

and some of the wild and lawless blood derived from her race of heathen sea-kings, was more fitted to stir their ambition and inflame their fancies, than curb their tempers and mould their hearts.

We have seen the career of Sweyn; but Sweyn was an angel of light compared to his brother Tostig. He who *can* be penitent has ever something lofty in his original nature; but Tostig was remorseless as the tiger, as treacherous and as fierce. With less intellectual capacities than any of his brothers, he had more personal ambition than all put together. A kind of effeminate vanity, not uncommon with daring natures (for the bravest races and the bravest soldiers are usually the vainest; the desire to shine is as visible in the fop as in the hero), made him restless both for command and notoriety. "May I ever be in the mouths of men," was his favourite prayer. Like his maternal ancestry, the Danes, he curled his long hair, and went as a bridegroom to the feast of the ravens.

Two only of that house had studied the Humane Letters, which were no longer disregarded by the princes of the Continent; they were the sweet sister, the eldest of the family, fading fast in her loveless home, and Harold.

But Harold's mind,—in which what we call common sense was carried to genius,—a mind singularly practical and sagacious, like his father's, cared little for theological learning and priestly legend—for all that poesy of religion in which the Woman was wafted from the sorrows of earth.

Godwin himself was no favourite of the Church, and had seen too much of the abuses of the Saxon priesthood, (perhaps, with few exceptions, the most corrupt and illiterate in all Europe, which is saying much,)

to instil into his children that reverence for the spiritual authority which existed abroad; and the enlightenment, which in him was experience in life, was in Harold, betimes, the result of study and reflection. The few books of the classical world then within reach of the student opened to the young Saxon views of human duties and human responsibilities utterly distinct from the unmeaning ceremonials and fleshly mortifications in which even the higher theology of that day placed the elements of virtue. He smiled in scorn when some Dane, whose life had been passed in the alternate drunkenness of wine and of blood, thought he had opened the gates of heaven by bequeathing lands gained by a robber's sword, to pamper the lazy sloth of some fifty monks. If those monks had presumed to question his own actions, his disdain would have been mixed with simple wonder that men so besotted in ignorance, and who could not construe the Latin of the very prayers they pattered, should presume to be the judges of educated men. It is possible —for his nature was earnest—that a pure and enlightened clergy, that even a clergy, though defective in life, zealous in duty and cultivated in mind,—such a clergy as Alfred sought to found, and as Lanfranc endeavoured (not without some success) to teach—would have bowed his strong sense to that grand and subtle truth which dwells in spiritual authority. But as it was, he stood aloof from the rude superstition of his age, and early in life made himself the arbiter of his own conscience. Reducing his religion to the simplest elements of our creed, he found rather in the books of Heathen authors than in the lives of the saints, his notions of the larger morality which relates to the citizen and the man. The love of country; the sense

of justice; fortitude in adverse and temperance in prosperous fortune, became portions of his very mind. Unlike his father, he played no actor's part in those qualities which had won him the popular heart. He was gentle and affable; above all, he was fair-dealing and just, not because it was politic to *seem*, but his nature to *be*, so.

Nevertheless, Harold's character, beautiful and sublime in many respects as it was, had its strong leaven of human imperfection in that very self-dependence which was born of his reason and his pride. In resting so solely on man's perceptions of the right, he lost one attribute of the true hero—*faith*. We do not mean that word in the religious sense alone, but in the more comprehensive. He did not rely on the Celestial Something pervading all nature, never seen, only felt when duly courted, stronger and lovelier than what eye could behold and mere reason could embrace. Believing, it is true, in God, he lost those fine links that unite God to man's secret heart, and which are woven alike from the simplicity of the child and the wisdom of the poet. To use a modern illustration, his large mind was a "cupola lighted from below."

His bravery, though inflexible as the fiercest sea-king's, when need arose for its exercise, was not his prominent characteristic. He despised the brute valour of Tostig,—his bravery was a necessary part of a firm and balanced manhood—the bravery of Hector, not Achilles. Constitutionally averse to bloodshed, he could seem timid where daring only gratified a wanton vanity, or aimed at a selfish object. On the other hand, if *duty* demanded daring, no danger could deter, no policy warp him;—he could seem rash; he could even seem merciless. In the what ought to be, he understood a *must* be.

And it was natural to this peculiar, yet thoroughly English temperament, to be, in action, rather steadfast and patient than quick and ready. Placed in perils familiar to him, nothing could exceed his vigour and address; but if taken unawares, and before his judgment could come to his aid, he was liable to be surprised into error. Large minds are rarely quick, unless they have been corrupted into unnatural vigilance by the necessities of suspicion. But a nature more thoroughly unsuspecting, more frank, trustful, and genuinely loyal than that young Earl's, it was impossible to conceive. All these attributes considered, we have the key to much of Harold's character and conduct in the later events of his fated and tragic life.

But with this temperament, so manly and simple, we are not to suppose that Harold, while rejecting the superstitions of one class, was so far beyond his time as to reject those of another. No son of fortune, no man placing himself and the world in antagonism, can ever escape from some belief in the Invisible. Cæsar could ridicule and profane the mystic rites of Roman mythology, but he must still believe in his *fortune*, as in a god. And Harold, in his very studies, seeing the freest and boldest minds of antiquity subjected to influences akin to those of his Saxon forefathers, felt less shame in yielding to *them*, vain as they might be, than in monkish impostures so easily detected. Though hitherto he had rejected all direct appeal to the magic devices of Hilda, the sound of her dark sayings, heard in childhood, still vibrated on his soul as man. Belief in omens, in days lucky or unlucky, in the stars, was universal in every class of the Saxon. Harold had his own fortunate day, the day of his na-

tivity, the 14th of October. All enterprises undertaken on that day had hitherto been successful. He believed in the virtue of that day, as Cromwell believed in his 3d of September. For the rest, we have described him as he was in that part of his career in which he is now presented. Whether altered by fate and circumstances, time will show. As yet, no selfish ambition leagued with the natural desire of youth and intellect for their fair share of fame and power. His patriotism, fed by the example of Greek and Roman worthies, was genuine, pure, and ardent; he could have stood in the pass with Leonidas, or leaped into the gulf with Curtius.

CHAPTER II

At dawn, Harold woke from uneasy and broken slumbers, and his eyes fell upon the face of Hilda, large, and fair, and unutterably calm, as the face of Egyptian sphinx.

"Have thy dreams been prophetic, son of Godwin?" said the Vala.

"Our Lord forfend," replied the Earl, with unusual devoutness.

"Tell them, and let me read the rede; sense dwells in the voices of the night."

Harold mused, and after a short pause, he said:

"Methinks, Hilda, I can myself explain how those dreams came to haunt me."

Then raising himself on his elbow, he continued, while he fixed his clear penetrating eyes upon his hostess:—

"Tell me frankly, Hilda, didst thou not cause some

light to shine on yonder knoll, by the mound and stone, within the temple of the Druids?"

But if Harold had suspected himself to be the dupe of some imposture, the thought vanished when he saw the look of keen interest, even of awe, which Hilda's face instantly assumed.

"Didst thou see a light, son of Godwin, by the altar of Thor, and over the bautastein of the mighty dead? a flame, lambent and livid, like moonbeams collected over snow?"

"So seemed to me the light."

"No human hand ever kindled that flame, which announces the presence of the Dead," said Hilda, with a tremulous voice; "though seldom, uncompelled by the seid and the rune, does the spectre itself warn the eyes of the living."

"What shape, or what shadow of shape, does that spectre assume?"

"It rises in the midst of the flame, pale as the mist on the mountain, and vast as the giants of old; with the sæx, and the spear, and the shield, of the sons of Woden.—Thou hast seen the Scin-læca," continued Hilda, looking full on the face of the Earl.

"If thou deceivest me not," began Harold, doubting still.

"Deceive thee! not to save the crown of the Saxon dare I mock the might of the dead. Knowest thou not—or hath thy vain lore stood in place of the lore of thy fathers—that where a hero of old is buried, his treasures lie in his grave; that over that grave is at times seen at night the flame that thou sawest, and the dead in his image of air? Oft seen in the days that are gone, when the dead and the living had one faith—were one race; now never marked, but for portent, and

prophecy, and doom:—glory or woe to the eyes that see! On yon knoll, Æsc (the first-born of Cerdic, that Father-King of the Saxons,) has his grave where the mound rises green, and the stone gleams wan by the altar of Thor. He smote the Britons in their temple, and he fell smiting. They buried him in his arms, and with the treasures his right hand had won. Fate hangs on the house of Cerdic, or the realm of the Saxon, when Woden calls the læca of his son from the grave."

Hilda, much troubled, bent her face over her clasped hands, and, rocking to and fro, muttered some runes unintelligible to the ear of her listener. Then she turned to him, commandingly, and said:

"Thy dreams now, indeed, are oracles, more true than living Vala could charm with the wand and the rune: Unfold them."

Thus adjured, Harold resumed:

"Methought, then, that I was on a broad, level plain, in the noon of day; all was clear to my eye, and glad to my heart. I was alone and went on my way rejoicing. Suddenly the earth opened under my feet, and I fell deep, fathom-deep;—deep, as if to that central pit, which our heathen sires called Niffelheim —the Home of Vapour—the hell of the dead who die without glory. Stunned by the fall, I lay long, locked as in a dream in the midst of a dream. When I opened my eyes, behold, I was girt round with dead men's bones; and the bones moved round me, undulating, as the dry leaves that wirble round in the winds of the winter. And from midst of them peered a trunkless skull, and on the skull was a mitre, and from the yawning jaws a voice came hissing, as a serpent's hiss, 'Harold, the scorner, thou art ours!' Then, as from

the buzz of an army, came voices multitudinous, 'Thou art ours!' I sought to rise, and behold my limbs were bound, and the gyves were fine and frail, as the web of the gossamer, and they weighed on me like chains of iron. And I felt an anguish of soul that no words can speak—an anguish both of horror and shame; and my manhood seemed to ooze from me, and I was weak as a child new born. Then suddenly there rushed forth a freezing wind, as from an air of ice, and the bones from their whirl stood still, and the buzz ceased, and the mitred skull grinned on me still and voiceless; and serpents darted their arrowy tongues from the eyeless sockets. And, lo, before me stood (O Hilda, I see it now!) the form of the spectre that had risen from yonder knoll. With his spear, and sæx, and his shield, he stood before me; and his face, though pale as that of one long dead, was stern as the face of a warrior in the van of armed men; he stretched his hand, and he smote his sæx on his shield, and the clang sounded hollow; the gyves broke at the clash—I sprang to my feet, and I stood side by side with the phantom, dauntless. Then, suddenly, the mitre on the skull changed to a helm; and where the skull had grinned, trunkless and harmless, stood a shape like War, made incarnate;—a Thing above giants, with its crest to the stars and its form an eclipse between the sun and the day. The earth changed to ocean, and the ocean was blood, and the ocean seemed deep as the seas where the whales sport in the North, but the surge rose not to the knee of that measureless image. And the ravens came round it from all parts of the heaven, and the vultures with the dead eyes and dull scream. And all the bones, before scattered and shapeless, sprung to life and to

form, some monks and some warriors; and there was a hoot, and a hiss, and a roar, and the storm of arms. And a broad pennon rose out of the sea of blood, and from the clouds came a pale hand, and it wrote on the pennon, 'Harold, the Accursed!' Then said the stern shape by my side, 'Harold, fearest thou the dead men's bones?' and its voice was as a trumpet that gives strength to the craven, and I answering, 'Niddering, indeed, were Harold, to fear the bones of the dead!'

"As I spoke, as if hell had burst loose, came a gibber of scorn, and all vanished at once, save the ocean of blood. Slowly came from the north, over the sea, a bird like a raven, save that it was blood-red, like the ocean; and there came from the south, swimming towards me, a lion. And I looked to the spectre; and the pride of war had gone from its face, which was so sad that methought I forgot raven and lion, and wept to see it. Then the spectre took me in its vast arms, and its breath froze my veins, and it kissed my brow and my lips, and said, gently and fondly, as my mother in some childish sickness, 'Harold, my best beloved, mourn not. Thou hast all which the sons of Woden dreamed in their dreams of Valhalla!' Thus saying, the form receded slowly, slowly, still gazing on me with its sad eyes. I stretched forth my hand to detain it, and in my grasp was a shadowy sceptre. And, lo! round me, as if from the earth, sprang up thegns and chiefs, in their armour; and a board was spread, and a wassail was blithe around me. So my heart felt cheered and light, and in my hand was still the sceptre. And we feasted long and merrily; but over the feast flapped the wings of the blood-red raven, and over the blood-red sea beyond,

swam the lion, near and near. And in the heavens there were two stars, one pale and steadfast, the other rushing and luminous; and a shadowy hand pointed from the cloud to the pale star, and a voice said, 'Lo, Harold! the star that shone on thy birth.' And another hand pointed to the luminous star, and another voice said, 'Lo, the star that shone on the birth of the victor.' Then, lo! the bright star grew fiercer and larger; and, rolling on with a hissing sound, as when iron is dipped into water, it rushed over the disc of the mournful planet, and the whole heavens seemed on fire. So methought the dream faded away, and in fading, I heard a full swell of music, as the swell of an anthem in an aisle; a music like that which but once in my life I heard; when I stood on the train of Edward, in the halls of Winchester, the day they crowned him king."

Harold ceased, and the Vala slowly lifted her head from her bosom, and surveyed him in profound silence, and with a gaze that seemed vacant and meaningless.

"Why dost thou look on me thus, and why art thou so silent?" asked the Earl.

"The cloud is on my sight, and the burthen is on my soul, and I cannot read thy rede," murmured the Vala. "But morn, the ghost-chaser, that waketh life, the action, charms into slumber life, the thought. As the stars pale at the rising of the sun, so fade the lights of the soul when the buds revive in the dews, and the lark sings to the day. In thy dream lies thy future, as the wing of the moth in the web of the changing worm; but, whether for weal or for woe, thou shalt burst through thy mesh, and spread thy plumes in the air. Of myself I know nought. Await the hour when Skulda shall pass into the soul of her servant,

and thy fate shall rush from my lips as the rush of the waters from the heart of the cave."

"I am content to abide," said Harold, with his wonted smile, so calm and so lofty; "but I cannot promise thee that I shall heed thy rede, or obey thy warning, when my reason hath awoke, as while I speak it awakens, from the fumes of the fancy and the mists of the night."

The Vala sighed heavily, but made no answer.

CHAPTER III

Githa, Earl Godwin's wife, sate in her chamber, and her heart was sad. In the room was one of her sons, the one dearer to her than all, Wolnoth, her darling. For the rest of her sons were stalwart and strong of frame, and in their infancy she had known not a mother's fears. But Wolnoth had come into the world before his time, and sharp had been the travail of the mother, and long between life and death the struggle of the newborn babe. And his cradle had been rocked with a trembling knee, and his pillow been bathed with hot tears. Frail had been his childhood—a thing that hung on her care; and now, as the boy grew, blooming and strong, into youth, the mother felt that she had given life twice to her child. Therefore was he more dear to her than the rest; and, therefore, as she gazed upon him now, fair and smiling, and hopeful, she mourned for him more than for Sweyn, the outcast and criminal, on his pilgrimage of woe, to the waters of Jordan, and the tomb of our Lord. For Wolnoth, selected as the hostage for the faith of his house, was to be sent from her arms to the Court of

William the Norman. And the youth smiled and was gay, choosing vestment and mantle, and ateghars of gold, that he might be flaunting and brave in the halls of knighthood and the beauty,—the school of the proudest chivalry of the Christian world. Too young, and too thoughtless, to share the wise hate of his elders for the manners and forms of the foreigners, their gaiety and splendour, as his boyhood had seen them, relieving the gloom of the cloister court, and contrasting the spleen and the rudeness of the Saxon temperament, had dazzled his fancy and half Normanised his mind. A proud and happy boy was he, to go as hostage for the faith, and representative of the rank, of his mighty kinsmen; and step into manhood in the eyes of the dames of Rouen.

By Wolnoth's side stood his young sister, Thyra, a mere infant; and her innocent sympathy with her brother's pleasure in gaud and toy saddened Githa yet more.

"O my son!" said the troubled mother, "why, of all my children, have they chosen thee? Harold is wise against danger, and Tostig is fierce against foes, and Gurth is too loving to awake hate in the sternest, and from the mirth of sunny Leofwine sorrow glints aside, as the shaft from the sheen of a shield. But thou, thou, O beloved!—cursed be the king that chose thee, and cruel was the father that forgot the light of the mother's eyes!"

"Tut, mother the dearest," said Wolnoth, pausing from the contemplation of a silk robe, all covered with broidered peacocks, which had been sent him as a gift from his sister the Queen, and wrought with her own fair hands; for a notable needle-woman, despite her sage lere, was the wife of the Saint King, as sorrow-

ful women mostly are,—"Tut! the bird must leave the nest when the wings are fledged. Harold the eagle, Tostig the kite, Gurth the ring-dove, and Leofwine the stare. See, my wings are the richest of all, mother, and bright is the sun in which thy peacock shall spread his pranked plumes."

Then, observing that his liveliness provoked no smile from his mother, he approached and said more seriously:

"Bethink thee, mother mine. No other choice was left to king or to father. Harold, and Tostig, and Leofwine, have their lordships and offices. Their posts are fixed, and they stand as the columns of our house. And Gurth is so young, and so Saxish and so the shadow of Harold, that his hate to the Norman is a by-word already among our youths; for hate is the more marked in a temper of love, as the blue of this border seems black against the white of the woof. But *I*;—the good King knows that I shall be welcome, for the Norman knights love Wolnoth, and I have spent hours by the knees of Montgommeri and Grantmesnil, listening to the feats of Rolfganger, and playing with their gold chains of knighthood. And the stout Count himself shall knight me, and I shall come back with the spurs of gold which thy ancestors, the brave Kings of Norway and Daneland, wore ere knighthood was known. Come, kiss me, my mother, and come see the brave falcons Harold has sent me: —true Welch!"

Githa rested her face on her son's shoulder, and her tears blinded her. The door opened gently, and Harold entered; and with the Earl, a pale dark-haired boy, Haco, the son of Sweyn.

But Githa, absorbed in her darling Wolnoth, scarce

saw the grandchild reared afar from her knees, and hurried at once to Harold. In his presence she felt comfort and safety; for Wolnoth leant on her heart, and her heart leant on Harold.

"O son, son!" she cried, "firmest of hand, surest of faith, and wisest of brain, in the house of Godwin, tell me that he yonder, he thy young brother, risks no danger in the halls of the Normans!"

"Not more than in these, mother," answered Harold, soothing her, with caressing lip and gentle tone. "Fierce and ruthless, men say, is William the Duke against foes with their swords in their hands, but debonnair and mild to the gentle,[1] frank host and kind lord. And these Normans have a code of their own, more grave than all morals, more binding than even their fanatic religion. Thou knowest it well, mother, for it comes from thy race of the North, and this code of *honour*, they call it, makes Wolnoth's head as sacred as the relics of a saint set in zimmes. Ask only, my brother, when thou comest in sight of the Norman Duke, ask only 'the kiss of peace,' and, that kiss on thy brow, thou wilt sleep more safe than if all the banners of England waved over thy couch."[2]

"But how long shall the exile be?" asked Githa, comforted. Harold's brow fell.

"Mother, not even to cheer thee will I deceive. The

[1] So Robert of Gloucester says pithily of William, "Kyng Wylliam was to mild men debonnere ynou."—HEARNE, v. ii. p. 309.

[2] This kiss of peace was held singularly sacred by the Normans, and all the more knightly races of the continent. Even the craftiest dissimulator, designing fraud, and stratagem, and murder to a foe, would not, to gain his ends, betray the pledge of the kiss of peace. When Henry II. consented to meet Becket after his return from Rome, and promised to remedy all of which his prelate complained, he struck prophetic dismay into Becket's heart by evading the kiss of peace.

time of the hostageship rests with the King and the Duke. As long as the one affects fear from the race of Godwin, as long as the other feigns care for such priests or such knights as were not banished from the realm, being not courtiers, but scattered wide and far in convent and homestead, so long will Wolnoth and Haco be guests in the Norman halls."

Githa wrung her hands.

"But comfort, my mother; Wolnoth is young, his eye is keen, and his spirit prompt and quick. He will mark these Norman captains, he will learn their strength and their weakness, their manner of war, and he will come back, not as Edward the King came, a lover of things un-Saxon, but able to warn and to guide us against the plots of the camp-court, which threatens more, year by year, the peace of the world. And he will see there arts we may worthily borrow: not the cut of a tunic, and the fold of a gonna, but the arts of men who found states and build nations. William the Duke is splendid and wise; merchants tell us how crafts thrive under his iron hand, and war-men say that his forts are constructed with skill and his battle-schemes planned as the mason plans key-stone and arch, with weight portioned out to the prop, and the force of the hand made tenfold by the science of the brain. So that the boy will return to us a man round and complete, a teacher of greybeards, and the sage of his kin; fit for earldom and rule, fit for glory and England. Grieve not, daughter of the Dane kings, that thy son, the best loved, hath nobler school and wider field than his brothers."

This appeal touched the proud heart of the niece of Canute the Great, and she almost forgot the grief of her love in the hope of her ambition.

She dried her tears and smiled upon Wolnoth, and already, in the dreams of a mother's vanity, saw him great as Godwin in council, and prosperous as Harold in the field. Nor, half Norman as he was, did the young man seem insensible of the manly and elevated patriotism of his brother's hinted lessons, though he felt they implied reproof. He came to the Earl, whose arm was round his mother, and said with a frank heartiness not usual to a nature somewhat frivolous and irresolute:

"Harold, thy tongue could kindle stones into men, and warm those men into Saxons. Thy Wolnoth shall not hang his head with shame when he comes back to our merrie land with shaven locks and spurs of gold. For if thou doubtest his race from his look, thou shalt put thy right hand on his heart, and feel England beat there in every pulse."

"Brave words, and well spoken," cried the Earl, and he placed his hand on the boy's head as in benison.

Till then, Haco had stood apart, conversing with the infant Thyra, whom his dark, mournful face awed and yet touched, for she nestled close to him, and put her little hand in his; but now, inspired no less than his cousin by Harold's noble speech, he came proudly forward by Wolnoth's side, and said:

"I, too, am English, and I have the name of Englishman to redeem."

Ere Harold could reply, Githa exclaimed:

"Leave there thy right hand on my child's head, and say, simply: 'By my troth and my plight, if the Duke detain Wolnoth, son of Githa, against just plea, and King's assent to his return, I, Harold, will, failing letter and nuncius, cross the seas, to restore the child to the mother.'"

Harold hesitated.

A sharp cry of reproach that went to his heart broke from Githa's lips.

"Ah! cold and self-heeding, wilt thou send him to bear a peril from which thou shrinkest thyself?"

"By my troth and my plight, then," said the Earl, "if, fair time elapsed, peace in England, without plea of justice, and against my king's fiat, Duke William of Normandy detain the hostages;—thy son and this dear boy, more sacred and more dear to me for his father's woes,—I will cross the seas, to restore the child to the mother, the fatherless to his fatherland. So help me, all-seeing One, Amen and Amen!"

CHAPTER IV

We have seen, in an earlier part of this record, that Harold possessed, amongst his numerous and more stately possessions, a house, not far from the old Roman dwelling-place of Hilda. And in this residence he now (save when with the King) made his chief abode. He gave as the reasons for his selection, the charm it took, in his eyes, from that signal mark of affection which his ceorls had rendered him, in purchasing the house and tilling the ground in his absence; and more especially the convenience of its vicinity to the new palace at Westminster; for, by Edward's special desire, while the other brothers repaired to their different domains, Harold remained near his royal person. To use the words of the great Norwegian chronicler, "Harold was always with the Court itself, and nearest to the King in all service." "The King loved him very much, and kept him as his own

son, for he had no children."[1] This attendance on Edward was naturally most close at the restoration to power of the Earl's family. For Harold, mild and conciliating, was, like Alred, a great peacemaker, and Edward had never cause to complain of him, as he believed he had of the rest of that haughty house. But the true spell which made dear to Harold the rude building of timber, with its doors open all day to his lithsmen, when with a light heart he escaped from the halls of Westminster, was the fair face of Edith his neighbour. The impression which this young girl had made upon Harold seemed to partake of the strength of a fatality. For Harold had loved her before the marvellous beauty of her womanhood began; and, occupied from his earliest youth in grave and earnest affairs, his heart had never been frittered away on the mean and frivolous affections of the idle. Now, in that comparative leisure of his stormy life, he was naturally most open to the influence of a charm more potent than all the glamoury of Hilda.

The autumn sun shone through the golden glades of the forest-land, when Edith sate alone on the knoll that faced forestland and road, and watched afar.

And the birds sung cheerily; but that was not the sound for which Edith listened: and the squirrel darted from tree to tree on the sward beyond; but not to see the games of the squirrel sat Edith by the grave of the Teuton. By-and-by, came the cry of the dogs, and the tall gre-hound[2] of Wales emerged from the bosky dells. Then Edith's heart heaved, and her eyes brightened. And now, with his hawk on his wrist, and his

[1] SNORRO STURLESON'S *Heimskringla*.—Laing's Translation, p. 75–77.

[2] The gre-hound was so called from hunting the *gre* or badger.

spear[1] in his hand, came, through the yellowing boughs, Harold the Earl.

And well may ye ween, that his heart beat as loud and his eye shone as bright as Edith's, when he saw who had watched for his footsteps on the sepulchral knoll; Love, forgetful of the presence of Death;—so has it ever been, so ever shall it be! He hastened his stride, and bounded up the gentle hillock, and his dogs, with a joyous bark, came round the knees of Edith. Then Harold shook the bird from his wrist, and it fell, with its light wing, on the altar-stone of Thor.

"Thou art late, but thou art welcome, Harold my kinsman," said Edith, simply, as she bent her face over the hounds, whose gaunt heads she caressed.

"Call me not kinsman," said Harold, shrinking, and with a dark cloud on his broad brow.

"And why, Harold?"

"Oh, Edith, why?" murmured Harold; and his thought added, "she knows not, poor child, that in that mockery of kinship the Church sets its ban on our bridals."

He turned, and chid his dogs fiercely as they gambolled in rough glee round their fair friend.

The hounds crouched at the feet of Edith; and Edith looked in mild wonder at the troubled face of the Earl.

"Thine eyes rebuke me, Edith, more than my words the hounds!" said Harold, gently. "But there is quick blood in my veins; and the mind must be calm when it would control the humour. Calm was my

[1] The spear and the hawk were as the badges of Saxon nobility; and a thegn was seldom seen abroad without the one on his left wrist, the other in his right hand.

mind, sweet Edith, in the old time, when thou wert an infant on my knee, and wreathing, with these rude hands, flower-chains for thy neck like the swan's down, I said, 'The flowers fade, but the chain lasts when love weaves it.'"

Edith again bent her face over the crouching hounds. Harold gazed on her with mournful fondness; and the bird still sung and the squirrel swung himself again from bough to bough. Edith spoke first:

"My godmother, thy sister, hath sent for me, Harold, and I am to go to the Court to-morrow. Shalt thou be there?"

"Surely," said Harold, in an anxious voice, "surely, I will be there! So my sister hath sent for thee: wittest thou wherefore?"

Edith grew very pale, and her tone trembled as she answered:

"Well-a-day, yes."

"It is as I feared, then!" exclaimed Harold, in great agitation; "and my sister, whom these monks have demented, leagues herself with the King against the law of the wide welkin and the grand religion of the human heart. Oh!" continued the Earl, kindling into an enthusiasm, rare to his even moods, but wrung as much from his broad sense as from his strong affection, "when I compare the Saxon of our land and day, all enervated and decrepit by priestly superstition, with his forefathers in the first Christian era, yielding to the religion they adopted in its simple truths, but not to that rot of social happiness and free manhood which this cold and lifeless monarchism—making virtue the absence of human ties—spreads around—which the great Bede,[1] though himself a

[1] Bed. *Epist. ad Egbert.*

monk, vainly but bitterly denounced;—yea, verily, when I see the Saxon already the theowe of the priest, I shudder to ask how long he will be folk-free of the tyrant."

He paused, breathed hard, and seizing, almost sternly, the girl's trembling arm, he resumed between his set teeth: "So they would have thee be a nun?—Thou wilt not,—thou durst not,—thy heart would perjure thy vows!"

"Ah, Harold!" answered Edith, moved out of all bashfulness by his emotion and her own terror of the convent, and answering, if with the love of a woman, still with all the unconsciousness of a child: "Better, oh better the grate of the body than that of the heart! —In the grave I could still live for those I love; behind the Grate, love itself must be dead. Yes, thou pitiest me, Harold; thy sister, the Queen, is gentle and kind; I will fling myself at her feet, and say: 'Youth is fond, and the world is fair: let me live my youth, and bless God in the world that he saw was good!'"

"My own, own dear Edith!" exclaimed Harold, overjoyed. "Say this. Be firm: they cannot and they dare not force thee! The law cannot wrench thee against thy will from the ward of thy guardian Hilda; and, where the law is, there Harold at least is strong,—and there at least our kinship, if my bane, is thy blessing."

"Why, Harold, sayest thou that our kinship is thy bane? It is so sweet to me to whisper to myself, 'Harold is of thy kith, though distant; and it is natural to thee to have pride in his fame, and joy in his presence!' Why is that sweetness to me, to thee so bitter?"

"Harold dares not say to the maid of his love, 'Give me thy right hand, and be my bride.'"

"Because," answered Harold, dropping the hand he had clasped, and folding his arms in deep dejection, "because but for that I should say: 'Edith, I love thee more than a brother: Edith, be Harold's wife!' And were I to say it, and were we to wed, all the priests of the Saxons would lift up their hands in horror, and curse our nuptials, and I should be the bann'd of that spectre the Church; and my house would shake to its foundations; and my father, and my brothers, and the thegns and the proceres, and the abbots and prelates, whose aid makes our force, would gather round me with threats and with prayers, that I might put thee aside. And mighty as I am now, so mighty once was Sweyn my brother; and outlaw as Sweyn is now, might Harold be; and outlaw if Harold were, what breast so broad as his could fill up the gap left in the defence of England? And the passions that I curb, as a rider his steed, might break their rein; and, strong in justice, and child of Nature, I might come, with banner and mail, against Church, and House, and Fatherland; and the blood of my countrymen might be poured like water: and, therefore, slave to the lying thraldom he despises, Harold dares not say to the maid of his love, 'Give me thy right hand, and be my bride!'"

Edith had listened in bewilderment and despair, her eyes fixed on his, and her face locked and rigid, as if turned to stone. But when he had ceased, and, moving some steps away, turned aside his manly countenance, that Edith might not perceive its anguish, the noble and sublime spirit of that sex which ever, when lowliest, most comprehends the lofty, rose superior both to love and to grief; and rising, she advanced,

and placing her slight hand on his stalwart shoulder, she said, half in pity, half in reverence:

"Never before, O Harold, did I feel so proud of thee: for Edith could not love thee as she doth, and will till the grave clasp her, if thou didst not love England more than Edith. Harold, till this hour I was a child, and I knew not my own heart: I look now into that heart, and I see that I am a woman. Harold, of the cloister I have now no fear: and all life does not shrink—no, it enlarges, and it soars into one desire —to be worthy to pray for thee!"

"Maid, maid!" exclaimed Harold, abruptly, and pale as the dead, "do not say thou hast no fear of the cloister. I adjure, I command thee, build not up between us that dismal everlasting wall. While thou art free Hope yet survives—a phantom, haply but Hope still."

"As thou wilt I will," said Edith, humbly: "order my fate so as pleases thee the best."

Then, not daring to trust herself longer, for she felt the tears rushing to her eyes, she turned away hastily, and left him alone beside the altar-stone and the tomb.

CHAPTER V

The next day, as Harold was entering the palace of Westminster, with intent to seek the King's lady, his father met him in one of the corridors, and, taking him gravely by the hand, said:

"My son, I have much on my mind regarding thee and our House; come with me."

"Nay," said the Earl, "by your leave let it be later.

For I have it on hand to see my sister, ere confessor, or monk, or schoolman, claim her hours!"

"Not so, Harold," said the Earl, briefly. "My daughter is now in her oratory, and we shall have time enow to treat of things mundane ere she is free to receive thee, and to preach to thee of things ghostly, the last miracle at St. Alban's, or the last dream of the King, who would be a great man and a stirring, if as restless when awake as he is in his sleep. Come."

Harold, in that filial obedience which belonged, as of course, to his antique cast of character, made no farther effort to escape, but with a sigh followed Godwin into one of the contiguous chambers.

"Harold," then said Earl Godwin, after closing the door carefully, "thou must not let the King keep thee longer in dalliance and idleness: thine earldom needs thee without delay. Thou knowest that these East Angles, as we Saxons still call them, are in truth mostly Danes and Norsemen; people jealous and fierce, and free, and more akin to the Normans than to the Saxons. My whole power in England hath been founded, not less on my common birth with the freefolk of Wessex—Saxons like myself, and therefore easy for me, a Saxon, to conciliate and control —than on the hold I have ever sought to establish, whether by arms or by arts, over the Danes in the realm. And I tell and I warn thee, Harold, as the natural heir of my greatness, that he who cannot command the stout hearts of the Anglo-Danes, will never maintain the race of Godwin in the post they have won in the vanguard of Saxon England."

"This I wot well, my father," answered Harold; "and I see with joy, that while those descendants of heroes and freemen are blended indissolubly with the

meeker Saxon, their freer laws and hardier manners are gradually supplanting, or rather regenerating, our own."

Godwin smiled approvingly on his son, and then his brow becoming serious, and the dark pupil of his blue eye dilating, he resumed:

"This is well, my son; and hast thou thought also, that while thou art loitering in these galleries, amidst the ghosts of men in monk cowls, Siward is shadowing our House with his glory, and all north the Humber rings with his name? Hast thou thought that all Mercia is in the hands of Leofric our rival, and that Algar his son, who ruled Wessex in my absence, left there a name so beloved, that had I stayed a year longer, the cry had been 'Algar,' not 'Godwin'?—for so is the multitude ever! Now aid me, Harold, for my soul is troubled, and I cannot work alone; and though I say naught to others, my heart received a death-blow when tears fell from its blood-springs on the brow of Sweyn, my first-born." The old man paused, and his lip quivered.

"Thou, thou alone, Harold, noble boy, thou alone didst stand by his side in the hall; alone, alone, and I blessed thee in that hour over all the rest of my sons. Well, well! now to earth again. Aid me, Harold. I open to thee my web: complete the woof when this hand is cold. The new tree that stands alone in the plain is soon nipped by the winter; fenced round with the forest, its youth takes shelter from its fellows.[1] So is it with a house newly founded; it must win strength from the allies that it sets round its slender stem. What had been Godwin, son of Wolnoth, had he not married into the kingly house of great Canute?

[1] TEGNER'S *Frithiof.*

It is this that gives my sons now the right to the loyal love of the Danes. The throne passed from Canute and his race, and the Saxons again had their hour; and I gave, as Jephtha gave his daughter, my blooming Edith to the cold bed of the Saxon king. Had sons sprung from that union, the grandson of Godwin, royal alike from Saxon and Dane, would reign on the throne of the isle. Fate ordered otherwise, and the spider must weave web anew. Thy brother, Tostig, has added more splendour than solid strength of our line, in his marriage with the daughter of Baldwin the Count. The foreigner helps us little in England. Thou, O Harold, must bring new props to the House. I would rather see thee wed to the child of one of our great rivals than to the daughter of kaisar, or outland king. Siward hath no daughter undisposed of. Algar, son of Leofric, hath a daughter fair as the fairest; make her thy bride that Algar may cease to be a foe. This alliance will render Mercia, in truth, subject to our principalities, since the stronger must quell the weaker. It doth more. Algar himself has married into the royalty of Wales.[1] Thou wilt win all those fierce tribes to thy side. Their forces will gain thee the marches, now held so feebly under Rolf the Norman, and in case of brief reverse, or sharp danger, their mountains will give refuge from all foes. This day, greeting Algar, he told me he meditated bestowing his daughter on Gryffyth, the rebel under-King of North Wales. Therefore," continued the old Earl, with a smile, "thou must speak in time, and

[1] Some of the chroniclers say that he married the daughter of Gryffyth, the king of North Wales, but Gryffyth certainly married Algar's daughter, and that double alliance could not have been permitted. It was probably, therefore, some more distant kinswoman of Gryffyth's that was united to Algar.

win and woo in the same breath. No hard task, methinks, for Harold of the golden tongue."

"Sir and father," replied the young Earl, whom the long speech addressed to him had prepared for its close, and whose habitual self-control saved him from disclosing his emotion, "I thank you duteously, for your care for my future, and hope to profit by your wisdom. I will ask the King's leave to go to my East Anglians, and hold there a folkmuth, administer justice, redress grievances, and make thegn and ceorl content with Harold, their Earl. But vain is peace in the realm, if there is strife in the house. And Aldyth, the daughter of Algar, cannot be house-wife to me."

"Why?" asked the old Earl, calmly, and surveying his son's face with those eyes so clear yet so unfathomable.

"Because, though I grant her fair, she pleases not my fancy, nor would give warmth to my hearth. Because, as thou knowest well, Algar and I have ever been opposed, both in camp and in council; and I am not the man who can sell my love, though I may stifle my anger. Earl Harold needs no bride to bring spearmen to his back at his need; and his lordships he will guard with the shield of a man, not the spindle of a woman."

"Said in spite and in error," replied the old Earl, coolly. "Small pain had it given thee to forgive Algar old quarrels, and clasp his hand as a father-in-law—if thou hadst had for his daughter what the great are forbidden to regard save as a folly."

"Is love a folly, my father?"

"Surely, yes," said the Earl, with some sadness—"surely, yes, for those who know that life is made up

of business and care, spun out in long years, nor counted by the joys of an hour. Surely, yes; thinkest thou that I loved my first wife, the proud sister of Canute, or that Edith, thy sister, loved Edward, when he placed the crown on her head?"

"My father, in Edith, my sister, our House has sacrificed enow to selfish power."

"I grant it, to selfish power," answered the eloquent old man, "but not enow for England's safety. Look to it, Harold; thy years, and thy fame, and thy state, place thee free from my control as a father, but not till thou sleepest in thy cerements art thou free from that father—thy land! Ponder it in thine own wise mind—wiser already than that which speaks to it under the hood of grey hairs. Ponder it, and ask thyself if thy power, when I am dead, is not necessary to the weal of England? and if aught that thy schemes can suggest would so strengthen that power, as to find in the heart of the kingdom a host of friends like the Mercians;—or if there could be a trouble and a bar to thy greatness, a wall in thy path, or a thorn in thy side, like the hate or the jealousy of Algar, the son of Leofric?"

Thus addressed, Harold's face, before serene and calm, grew overcast; and he felt the force of his father's words when appealing to his reason—not to his affections. The old man saw the advantage he had gained, and prudently forbore to press it. Rising, he drew round him his sweeping gonna lined with furs, and only when he reached the door, he added:

"The old see afar; they stand on the height of experience, as a warder on the crown of a tower; and I tell thee, Harold, that if thou let slip this golden occasion, years hence—long and many—thou wilt rue the

loss of the hour. And that, unless Mercia, as the centre of the kingdom, be reconciled to thy power, thou wilt stand high indeed—but on the shelf of a precipice. And if, as I suspect, thou lovest some other who now clouds thy perception, and will then check thy ambition, thou wilt break her heart with thy desertion, or gnaw thine own with regret. For love dies in possession—ambition has no fruition, and so lives forever."

"That ambition is not mine, my father," exclaimed Harold, earnestly; "I have not thy love of power, glorious in thee, even in its extremes. I have not thy——"

"Seventy years!" interrupted the old man, concluding the sentence. "At seventy all men who have been great will speak as I do; yet all will have known love. Thou not ambitious, Harold? Thou knowest not thyself, nor knowest thou yet what ambition is. That which I see far before me as thy natural prize, I dare not, or I will not say. When time sets that prize within reach of thy spear's point, say then, 'I am not ambitious!' Ponder and decide."

And Harold pondered long, and decided not as Godwin could have wished. For he had not the seventy years of his father, and the prize lay yet in the womb of the mountains; though the dwarf and the gnome were already fashioning the ore to the shape of a crown.

CHAPTER VI

While Harold mused over his father's words, Edith, seated on a low stool beside the Lady of England, listened with earnest but mournful reverence to her royal namesake.

The Queen's [1] closet opened like the King's on one hand to an oratory, on the other to a spacious anteroom; the lower part of the walls was covered with arras, leaving space for a niche that contained an image of the Virgin. Near the doorway to the oratory, was the stoupe or aspersorium for holy-water; and in various cysts and crypts, in either room, were caskets containing the relics of saints. The purple light from the stained glass of a high narrow window, shaped in the Saxon arch, streamed rich and full over the Queen's bended head like a glory, and tinged her pale cheek, as with a maiden blush; and she might have furnished a sweet model for early artist, in his dreams of St. Mary the Mother, not when, young and blest, she held the divine infant in her arms, but when sorrow had reached even the immaculate bosom and the stone had been rolled over the Holy Sepulchre. For beautiful the face still was, and mild beyond all words; but, beyond all words also, sad in its tender resignation.

And thus said the Queen to her godchild:

"Why dost thou hesitate and turn away? Thinkest thou, poor child, in thine ignorance of life, that the world ever can give thee a bliss greater than the calm

[1] The title of queen is employed in these pages, as one which our historians have unhesitatingly given to the consorts of our Saxon kings; but the usual and correct designation of Edward's royal wife, in her own time, would be, Edith the Lady.

of the cloister? Pause, and ask thyself, young as thou art, if all the true happiness thou hast known, is not bounded to hope. As long as thou hopest, thou art happy."

Edith sighed deeply, and moved her young head in involuntary acquiescence.

"And what is life to the nun, but hope. In that hope, she knows not the present, she lives in the future; she hears ever singing the chorus of the angels, as St. Dunstan heard them sing at the birth of Edgar.[1] That hope unfolds to her the heiligthum of the future. On earth her body, in heaven her soul!"

"And her heart, O Lady of England?" cried Edith, with a sharp pang.

The Queen paused a moment, and laid her pale hand kindly on Edith's bosom.

"Not beating, child, as thine does now, with vain thoughts, and worldly desires; but calm, calm as mine. It is in our power," resumed the Queen, after a second pause, "it is in our power to make the life within us all soul; so that the heart is not, or is felt not; so that grief and joy have no power over us; so that we look tranquil on the stormy earth, as yon image of the Virgin, whom we make our example, looks from the silent niche. Listen, my godchild and darling.

"I have known human state, and human debasement. In these halls I woke Lady of England, and, ere sunset, my lord banished me, without one mark of honour, without one word of comfort, to the convent of Wherwell;—my father, my mother, my kin, all in exile; and my tears falling fast for them, but not on a husband's bosom."

"Ah then, noble Edith," said the girl, colouring

[1] ETHEL. *De Gen. Reg. Ang.*

with anger at the remembered wrong for her Queen, "ah then, surely, at least, thy heart made itself heard."

"Heard, yea verily," said the Queen, looking up, and pressing her hands; "heard, but the soul rebuked it. And the soul said, 'Blessed are they that mourn;' and I rejoiced at the new trial which brought me nearer to Him who chastens those He loves."

"But thy banished kin—the valiant, the wise; they who placed thy lord on the throne?"

"Was it no comfort," answered the Queen simply, "to think that in the House of God my prayers for them would be more accepted than in the halls of kings? Yes, my child, I have known the world's honour, and the world's disgrace, and I have schooled my heart to be calm in both."

"Ah, thou art above human strength, Queen and Saint," exclaimed Edith; "and I have heard it said of thee, that as thou art now, thou wert from thine earliest years;[1] ever the sweet, the calm, the holy—ever less on earth than in heaven."

Something there was in the Queen's eyes, as she raised them towards Edith at this burst of enthusiasm, that gave for a moment, to a face otherwise so dissimilar, the likeness to her father; something, in that large pupil, of the impenetrable unrevealing depth of a nature close and secret in self-control. And a more acute observer than Edith might long have been perplexed and haunted with that look, wondering if, indeed, under the divine and spiritual composure, lurked the mystery of human passion.

"My child," said the Queen, with the faintest smile upon her lips, and drawing Edith towards her, "there are moments when all that breathe the breath of life

[1] Ailred, *De Vit. Edward Confess.*

feel, or have felt, alike. In my vain youth I read, I mused, I pondered, but over worldly lore. And what men called the sanctity of virtue, was perhaps but the silence of thought. Now I have put aside those early and childish dreams and shadows, remembering them not, save (here the smile grew more pronounced) to puzzle some poor schoolboy with the knots and riddles of the sharp grammarian.[1] But not to speak of myself have I sent for thee. Edith, again and again, solemnly and sincerely, I pray thee to obey the wish of my lord the King. And now, while yet in all the bloom of thought, as of youth, while thou hast no memory save the child's, enter on the Realm of Peace."

"I cannot, I dare not, I cannot—ah, ask me not," said poor Edith, covering her face with her hands.

Those hands the Queen gently withdrew; and looking steadfastly in the changeful and half-averted face, she said mournfully, "Is it so, my godchild? and is thy heart set on the hopes of earth—thy dreams on the love of man?"

"Nay," answered Edith, equivocating; "but I have promised not to take the veil."

"Promised to Hilda?"

"Hilda," exclaimed Edith readily, "would never consent to it. Thou knowest her strong nature, her distaste to—to——"

"The laws of our holy Church—I do; and for that reason it is, mainly, that I join with the King in seeking to abstract thee from her influence. But it is not Hilda that thou hast promised?"

Edith hung her head.

"Is it to woman or to man?"

[1] Ingulfus.

Before Edith could answer the door from the anteroom opened gently, but without the usual ceremony, and Harold entered. His quick quiet eye embraced both forms, and curbed Edith's young impulse, which made her start from her seat, and advance joyously towards him as a protector.

"Fair day to thee, my sister," said the Earl, advancing; "and pardon, if I break thus rudely on thy leisure; for few are the moments when beggar and Benedictine leave thee free to receive thy brother."

"Dost thou reproach me, Harold?"

"No, Heaven forfend!" replied the Earl, cordially, and with a look at once of pity and admiration; "for thou art one of the few, in this court of simulators, sincere and true; and it pleases thee to serve the Divine Power in thy way, as it pleases me to serve Him in mine."

"Thine, Harold?" said the Queen, shaking her head, but with a look of some human pride and fondness in her fair face.

"Mine; as I learned it from thee when I was thy pupil, Edith; when to those studies in which thou didst precede me, thou first didst lure me from sport and pastime; and from thee I learned to glow over the deeds of Greek and Roman, and say, 'They lived and died as men; like them may I live and die!'"

"Oh, true—too true!" said the Queen, with a sigh; "and I am to blame grievously that I did so pervert to earth a mind that might otherwise have learned holier examples;—nay, smile not with that haughty lip, my brother; for believe me—yea, believe me—there is more true valour in the life of one patient martyr than in the victories of Cæsar, or even the defeat of Brutus."

"It may be so," replied the Earl, "but out of the same oak we carve the spear and the cross; and those not worthy to hold the one, may yet not guiltily wield the other. Each to his path of life—and mine is chosen." Then, changing his voice, with some abruptness, he said, "But what hast thou been saying to thy fair godchild, that her cheek is pale, and her eyelids seem so heavy? Edith, Edith, my sister, beware how thou shapest the lot of the martyr without the peace of the saint. Had Algive the nun been wedded to Sweyn our brother, Sweyn were not wending, barefooted and forlorn, to lay the wrecks of desolated life at the Holy Tomb."

"Harold, Harold!" faltered the Queen, much struck with his words.

"But," the Earl continued—and something of the pathos which belongs to deep emotion vibrated in the eloquent voice, accustomed to command and persuade—"we strip not the green leaves for our yule-hearths—we gather them up when dry and sere. Leave youth on the bough—let the bird sing to it—let it play free in the airs of heaven. Smoke comes from the branch which, cut in the sap, is cast upon the fire, and regret from the heart which is severed from the world while the world is in its May."

The Queen paced slowly, but in evident agitation, to and fro the room, and her hands clasped convulsively the rosary round her neck; then, after a pause of thought, she motioned to Edith and, pointing to the oratory, said with forced composure, "Enter there, and there kneel; commune with thyself, and be still. Ask for a sign from above—pray for the grace within. Go; I would speak alone with Harold."

Edith crossed her arms on her bosom meekly, and

passed into the oratory. The Queen watched her for a few moments tenderly, as the slight, child-like form bent before the sacred symbol. Then she closed the door gently, and coming with a quick step to Harold, said, in a low but clear voice, "Dost thou love the maiden?"

"Sister," answered the Earl sadly, "I love her as a man should love woman—more than my life, but less than the ends life lives for."

"Oh, world, world, world!" cried the Queen, passionately, "not even to thine own objects art thou true. O world! O world! thou desirest happiness below, and at every turn, with every vanity, thou tramplest happiness under foot! Yes, yes; they said to me, 'For the sake of our greatness, thou shalt wed King Edward.' And I live in the eyes that loathe me—and—and——" The Queen, as if conscience-stricken, paused aghast, kissed devoutly the relic suspended to her rosary, and continued, with such calmness that it seemed as if two women were blent in one, so startling was the contrast. "And I have had my reward, but not from the world! Even so, Harold the Earl, and Earl's son, thou lovest yon fair child, and she thee; and ye might be happy, if happiness were earth's end; but, though high-born, and of fair temporal possessions, she brings thee not lands broad enough for her dowry, nor troops of kindred to swell thy lithsmen, and she is not a markstone in thy march to ambition; and so thou lovest her as man loves woman—'less than the ends life lives for!'"

"Sister," said Harold, "thou speakest as I love to hear thee speak—as my bright-eyed, rose-lipped sister spoke in the days of old; thou speakest as a woman with warm heart, and not as the mummy in the stiff

cerements of priestly form; and if thou art with me, and thou wilt give me countenance, I will marry thy godchild, and save her alike from the dire superstitions of Hilda, and the grave of the abhorrent convent."

"But my father—my father!" cried the Queen, "who ever bended that soul of steel?"

"It is not my father I fear; it is thee and thy monks. Forgettest thou that Edith and I are within the six banned degrees of the Church?"

"True, most true," said the Queen, with a look of great terror; "I had forgotten. Avaunt, the very thought! Pray—fast—banish it—my poor, poor brother!" and she kissed his brow.

"So, there fades the woman, and the mummy speaks again!" said Harold, bitterly. "Be it so: I bow to my doom. Well, there may be a time when Nature on the throne of England shall prevail over Priestcraft; and, in guerdon for all my services, I will then ask a king who hath blood in his veins to win me the Pope's pardon and benison. Leave me that hope, my sister, and leave thy godchild on the shores of the living world."

The Queen made no answer, and Harold, auguring ill from her silence, moved on and opened the door of the oratory. But the image that there met him, that figure still kneeling, those eyes, so earnest in the tears that streamed from them fast and unheeded, fixed on the holy rood—awed his step and checked his voice. Nor till the girl had risen, did he break silence; then he said, gently, "My sister will press thee no more, Edith——"

"I say not that!" exclaimed the Queen.

"Or if she doth, remember thy plighted promise

under the wide cope of blue heaven, the old nor least holy temple of our common Father."

With these words he left the room.

CHAPTER VII

Harold passed into the Queen's ante-chamber. Here the attendance was small and select compared with the crowds which we shall see presently in the ante-room to the King's closet; for here came chiefly the more learned ecclesiastics, attracted instinctively by the Queen's own mental culture, and few indeed were they at that day (perhaps the most illiterate known in England since the death of Alfred;[1]) and here came not the tribe of impostors, and the relic-venders, whom the infantine simplicity and lavish waste of the Confessor attracted. Some four or five priests and monks, some lonely widow, some orphan child, humble worth, or protected sorrow, made the noiseless levee of the sweet, sad Queen.

The groups turned, with patient eyes, towards the Earl as he emerged from that chamber, which it was rare indeed to quit unconsoled, and marvelled at the flush in his cheek, and the disquiet on his brow; but Harold was dear to the clients of his sister; for, despite his supposed indifference to the mere priestly virtues (if virtues we call them) of the decrepit time, his intellect was respected by yon learned ecclesias-

[1] The clergy (says Malmesbury), contented with a very slight share of learning, could scarcely stammer out the words of the sacraments; and a person who understood grammar was an object of wonder and astonishment. Other authorities, likely to be impartial, speak quite as strongly as to the prevalent ignorance of the time.

tics; and his character, as the foe of all injustice, and the fosterer of all that were desolate, was known to yon pale-eyed widow and yon trembling orphan.

In the atmosphere of that quiet assembly, the Earl seemed to recover his kindly temperament, and he paused to address a friendly or a soothing word to each; so that when he vanished, the hearts there felt more light; and the silence hushed before his entrance, was broken by many whispers in praise of the good Earl.

Descending a staircase without the walls—as even in royal halls the principal staircases were then—Harold gained a wide court, in which loitered several house-carles [1] and attendants, whether of the King or the visitors; and, reaching the entrance of the palace, took his way towards the King's rooms, which lay near, and round, what is now called "The Painted Chamber," then used as a bedroom by Edward on state occasions.

And now he entered the ante-chamber of his royal brother-in-law. Crowded it was, but rather seemed it the hall of a convent than the ante-room of a king. Monks, pilgrims, priests, met his eye in every nook; and not there did the Earl pause to practise the arts of popular favour. Passing erect through the midst, he beckoned forth the officer, in attendance at the extreme end, who, after an interchange of whispers, ushered him into the royal presence. The monks and the priests, gazing towards the door which had closed on his stately form, said to each other:

[1] House-carles in the royal court were the body-guard, mostly, if not all, of Danish origin. They appear to have been first formed, or at least employed, in that capacity by Canute. With the great earls, the house-carles probably exercised the same functions; but in the ordinary acceptation of the word in families of lower rank, house-carle was a domestic servant.

"The King's Norman favourites at least honoured the Church."

"That is true," said an abbot; "and an it were not for two things, I should love the Norman better than the Saxon."

"What are they, my father?" asked an aspiring young monk.

"*Inprinis*," quoth the abbot, proud of the one Latin word he thought he knew, but, that, as we see, was an error; "they cannot speak so as to be understood, and I fear me much they incline to mere carnal learning."

Here there was a sanctified groan:—

"Count William himself spoke to me in Latin!" continued the abbot, raising his eyebrows.

"Did he?—Wonderful!" exclaimed several voices. "And what did you answer, holy father?"

"Marry," said the abbot solemnly, "I replied, *Inprinis*."

"Good!" said the young monk, with a look of profound admiration.

"Whereat the good Count looked puzzled—as I meant him to be:—a heinous fault, and one intolerant to the clergy, that love of profane tongues! And the next thing against your Norman is (added the abbot, with a sly wink), that he is a close man, who loves not his stoup; now, I say, that a priest never has more hold over a sinner than when he makes the sinner open his heart to him."

"That's clear!" said a fat priest, with a lubricate and shining nose.

"And how," pursued the abbot triumphantly, "can a sinner open his heavy heart until you have given him something to lighten it? Oh, many and many a wretched man have I comforted spiritually over a

flagon of stout ale; and many a good legacy to the Church hath come out of a friendly wassail between watchful shepherd and strayed sheep! But what hast thou there?" resumed the abbot, turning to a man, clad in the lay garb of a burgess of London, who had just entered the room, followed by a youth, bearing what seemed a coffer, covered with a fine linen cloth.

"Holy father!" said the burgess, wiping his forehead, "it is a treasure so great, that I trow Hugoline, the King's treasurer, will scowl at me for a year to come, for he likes to keep his own grip on the King's gold."

At this indiscreet observation, the abbot, the monks, and all the priestly bystanders looked grim and gloomy, for each had his own special design upon the peace of poor Hugoline, the treasurer, and liked not to see him the prey of a layman.

"*Inprimis!*" quoth the abbot, puffing out the word with great scorn; "thinkest thou, son of Mammon, that our good King sets his pious heart on gew-gaw, and gems, and such vanities? Thou shouldst take the goods to Count Baldwin of Flanders; or Tostig, the proud Earl's proud son."

"Marry!" said the cheapman, with a smile; "my treasure will find small price with Baldwin the scoffer, and Tostig the vain! Nor need ye look at me so sternly, my fathers; but rather vie with each other who shall win this wonder of wonders for his own convent; know, in a word, that it is the right thumb of St. Jude, which a worthy man bought at Rome for me, for 3000 lb. weight of silver; and I ask but 500 lb. over the purchase for my pains and my fee." [1]

[1] This was cheap. For Agelnoth, Archbishop of Canterbury, gave the Pope 6000 lb. weight of silver for the arm of St. Augustine.—MALMESBURY.

"Humph!" said the abbot.

"Humph!" said the aspiring young monk; the rest gathered wistfully round the linen cloth.

A fiery exclamation of wrath and disdain was here heard; and all turning, saw a tall, fierce-looking thegn, who had found his way into that group, like a hawk in a rookery.

"Dost thou tell me, knave," quoth the thegn, in a dialect that bespoke him a Dane by origin, with the broad burr still retained in the north; "dost thou tell me that the King will waste his gold on such fooleries, while the fort built by Canute at the flood of the Humber is all fallen into ruin, without a man in steel jacket to keep watch on the war fleets of Swede and Norwegian?"

"Worshipful minister," replied the cheapman, with some slight irony in his tone, "these reverend fathers will tell thee that the thumb of St. Jude is far better aid against Swede and Norwegian than forts of stone and jackets of steel; nathless, if thou wantest jackets of steel, I have some to sell at a fair price, of the last fashion, and helms with long nose-pieces, as are worn by the Normans."

"The thumb of a withered old saint," cried the Dane, not heeding the last words, "more defence at the mouth of the Humber than crenellated castles and mailed men!"

"Surely, naught son," said the abbot, looking shocked, and taking part with the cheapman. "Dost thou not remember that, in the pious and famous council of 1014, it was decreed to put aside all weapons of flesh against thy heathen countrymen, and depend alone on St. Michael to fight for us? Thinkest thou that the saint would ever suffer his holy thumb

to fall into the hands of the Gentiles?—never! Go to, thou art not fit to have conduct of the King's wars. Go to, and repent, my son, or the King shall hear of it."

"Ah, wolf in sheep's clothing!" muttered the Dane, turning on his heel; "if thy monastery were but built on the other side the Humber!"

The cheapman heard him, and smiled. While such the scene in the ante-room, we follow Harold into the King's presence.

On entering, he found there a man in the prime of life, and though richly clad in embroidered gonna, and with gilt ateghar at his side, still with the loose robe, the long moustache, and the skin of the throat and right hand punctured with characters and devices, which proved his adherence to the fashions of the Saxon.[1] And Harold's eye sparkled, for in this guest he recognised the father of Aldyth, Earl Algar, son of Leofric. The two nobles exchanged grave salutations, and each eyed the other wistfully.

The contrast between the two was striking. The Danish race were men generally of larger frame and grander mould than the Saxon;[2] and though in all else, as to exterior, Harold was eminently Saxon, yet, in common with his brothers, he took from the moth-

[1] William of Malmesbury says, that the English, at the time of the Conquest, loaded their arms with gold bracelets, and *adorned* their skins with punctured designs, *i.e.*, a sort of tattooing. He says, that they then wore short garments, reaching to the mid-knee; but that was a Norman fashion, and the loose robes assigned in the text to Algar were the old Saxon fashion, which made but little distinction between the dress of women and that of men.

[2] And in England, to this day, the descendants of the Anglo-Danes, in Cumberland and Yorkshire, are still a taller and bonier race than those of the Anglo-Saxons, as in Surrey and Sussex.

er's side the lofty air and iron frame of the old kings of the sea. But Algar, below the middle height, though well set, was slight in comparison with Harold. His strength was that which men often take rather from the nerve than the muscle; a strength that belongs to quick tempers and restless energies. His light blue eye, singularly vivid and glittering; his quivering lip, the veins swelling at each emotion on the fair white temples; the long yellow hair, bright as gold, and resisting, in its easy curls, all attempts to curb it into the smooth flow most in fashion; the nervous movements of the gesture; the somewhat sharp and hasty tones of the voice; all opposed, as much as if the two men were of different races, the steady, deep eye of Harold, his composed mien, sweet and majestic, his decorous locks parted on the king-like front, with their large single curl where they touched the shoulder. Intelligence and will were apparent in both the men; but the intelligence of one was acute and rapid, that of the other profound and steadfast; the will of one broke in flashes of lightning, that of the other was calm as the summer sun at noon.

"Thou art welcome, Harold," said the King, with less than his usual listlessness, and with a look of relief as the Earl approached him.

"Our good Algar comes to us with a suit well worthy consideration, though pressed somewhat hotly, and evincing too great a desire for goods worldly; contrasting in this his most laudable father our well-beloved Leofric, who spends his substance in endowing monasteries and dispensing alms; wherefor he shall receive a hundred-fold in the treasure-house above."

"A good interest, doubtless, my lord the King,"

said Algar, quickly, "but one that is not paid to his heirs; and the more need, if my father (whom I blame not for doing as he lists with his own) gives all he hath to the monks—the more need, I say, to take care that his son shall be enabled to follow his example. As it is, most noble King, I fear me that Algar, son of Leofric, will have nothing to give. In brief, Earl Harold," continued Algar, turning to his fellow-thegn—"in brief, thus stands the matter. When our lord the King was first graciously pleased to consent to rule in England, the two chiefs who most assured his throne were thy father and mine: often foes, they laid aside feud and jealousy for the sake of the Saxon line. Now, since then, thy father hath strung earldom to earldom, like links in a coat-mail. And, save Northumbria and Mercia, well-nigh all England falls to him and his sons: whereas my father remains what he was, and my father's son stands landless and penceless. In thine absence the King was graciously pleased to bestow on me thy father's earldom; men say that I ruled it well. Thy father returns, and though" (here Algar's eyes shot fire, and his hand involuntarily rested on his ateghar) "I could have held it, methinks, by the strong hand, I gave it up at my father's prayer and the King's hest, with a free heart. Now, therefore, I come to my lord, and I ask, 'What lands and what lordships canst thou spare in broad England to Algar, once Earl of Wessex, and son to the Leofric whose hand smoothed the way to thy throne?' My lord the King is pleased to preach to me contempt of the world; thou dost not despise the world, Earl of the East Angles,—what sayest thou to the heir of Leofric?"

"That thy suit is just," answered Harold, calmly, "but urged with small reverence."

Earl Algar bounded like a stag that the arrow hath startled.

"It becomes thee, who hast backed thy suits with war-ships and mail, to talk of reverence, and rebuke one whose fathers reigned over earldoms,[1] when thine were, no doubt, ceorls at the plough. But for Edric Streone, the traitor and low-born, what had been Wolnoth, thy grandsire?"

So rude and home an assault in the presence of the King, who, though personally he loved Harold in his lukewarm way, yet, like all weak men, was not displeased to see the strong split their strength against each other, brought the blood into Harold's cheek; but he answered calmly:

"We live in a land, son of Leofric, in which birth, though not disesteemed, gives of itself no power in council or camp. We belong to a land where men are valued for what they are, not for what their dead ancestors might have been. So has it been for ages in Saxon England, where my fathers, through Godwin, as thou sayest, might have been ceorls; and so, I have heard, it is in the land of the martial Danes, where my fathers, through Githa, reigned on the thrones of the North."

"Thou dost well," said Algar, gnawing his lip, "to

[1] Very few of the greater Saxon nobles could pretend to a lengthened succession in their demesnes. The wars with the Danes, the many revolutions which threw new families uppermost, the confiscations and banishments, and the invariable rule of rejecting the heir, if not of mature years at his father's death, caused rapid changes of dynasty in the several earldoms. But the family of Leofric had just claims to a very rare antiquity in their Mercian lordship. Leofric was the sixth Earl of Chester and Coventry, in lineal descent from his namesake, Leofric the First; he extended the supremacy of his hereditary lordship over all Mercia. See DUGDALE, *Monast.* vol. iii. p. 102; and PALGRAVE'S *Commonwealth, Proofs and Illustrations,* p. 291.

shelter thyself on the spindle side, but we Saxons of pure descent think little of your kings of the North, pirates and idolaters, and eaters of horseflesh; but enjoy what thou hast, and let Algar have his due."

"It is for the King, not his servant, to answer the prayer of Algar," said Harold, withdrawing to the farther end of the room.

Algar's eye followed him, and observing that the King was fast sinking into one of the fits of religious reverie in which he sought to be inspired with a decision, whenever his mind was perplexed, he moved with a light step to Harold, put his hand on his shoulder, and whispered:

"We do ill to quarrel with each other—I repent me of hot words—enough. Thy father is a wise man, and sees far—thy father would have us friends. Be it so. Hearken: my daughter Aldyth is esteemed not the least fair of the maidens in England; I will give her to thee as thy wife, and as thy morgen gift, thou shalt win for me from the King the earldom forfeited by thy brother Sweyn, now parcelled out amongst sub-earls and thegns—easy enow to control. By the shrine of St. Alban, dost thou hesitate, man?"

"No, not an instant," said Harold, stung to the quick. "Not, couldst thou offer me all Mercia as her dower, would I wed the daughter of Algar; and bend my knee, as a son to a wife's father, to the man who despises my lineage, while he truckles to my power."

Algar's face grew convulsed with rage; but without saying a word to the Earl he strode back to Edward, who now with vacant eyes looked up from the rosary over which he had been bending, and said abruptly:

"My lord the King, I have spoken as I think it becomes a man who knows his own claims, and believes

in the gratitude of princes. Three days will I tarry in London for your gracious answer; on the fourth I depart. May the saints guard your throne, and bring around it its best defence, the thegn-born satraps whose fathers fought with Alfred and Athelstan. All went well with merrie England till the hoof of the Dane King broke the soil, and mushrooms sprung up where the oak-trees fell."

When the son of Leofric had left the chamber, the King rose wearily and said in Norman French, to which language he always yearningly returned when with those who could speak it:

"*Beau frère* and *bien aimé*, in what trifles must a king pass his life! And, all this while, matters grave and urgent demand me. Know that Eadmer, the cheapman, waits without, and hath brought me, dear and good man, the thumb of St. Jude! What thought of delight! And this unmannerly son of strife, with his jay's voice and wolf's eyes, screaming at me for earldoms!—oh the folly of man! Naught, naught, very naught!"

"Sir and King," said Harold; "it ill becomes me to arraign your pious desires, but these relics are of vast cost; our coasts are ill defended, and the Dane yet lays claim to your kingdom. Three thousand pounds of silver and more does it need to repair even the old wall of London and Southweorc."

"Three thousand pounds!" cried the King; "thou art mad, Harold! I have scarce twice that sum in the treasury; and besides the thumb of St. Jude, I daily expect the tooth of St. Remigius—the tooth of St. Remigius!"

Harold sighed. "Vex not yourself, my lord, I will see to the defences of London. For, thanks to your

grace, my revenues are large, while my wants are simple. I seek you now to pray your leave to visit my earldom. My lithsmen murmur at my absence, and grievances, many and sore, have arisen in my exile."

The King stared in terror; and his look was that of a child when about to be left in the dark.

"Nay, nay; I cannot spare thee, *beau frère*. Thou curbest all these stiff thegns—thou leavest me time for the devout; moreover, thy father, thy father, I will not be left to thy father! I love him not!"

"My father," said Harold, mournfully, "returns to his own earldom; and of all our House you will have but the mild face of your queen by your side!"

The King's lip writhed at that hinted rebuke, or implied consolation.

"Edith the Queen," he said, after a slight pause, "is pious and good; and she hath never gainsaid my will, and she hath set before her as a model the chaste Susannah, as I, unworthy man, from youth upward, have walked in the pure steps of Joseph.[1] But," added the King, with a touch of human feeling in his voice, "canst thou not conceive, Harold, thou who art a warrior, what it would be to see ever before thee the face of thy deadliest foe—the one against whom all thy struggles of life and death had turned into memories of hyssop and gall?"

"My sister!" exclaimed Harold, in indignant amaze, "My sister thy deadliest foe! She who never once murmured at neglect, disgrace—she whose youth hath been consumed in prayers for thee and thy realm—my sister! O King, I dream?"

"Thou dreamest not, carnal man," said the King,

[1] Ailred, *de Vit. Edw.*

peevishly. "Dreams are the gifts of the saints, and are not granted to such as thou! Dost thou think that, in the prime of my manhood, I could have youth and beauty forced on my sight, and hear man's law and man's voice say, 'They are thine, and thine only,' and not feel that war was brought to my hearth, and a snare set on my bed, and that the fiend had set watch on my soul? Verily, I tell thee, man of battle, that thou hast known no strife as awful as mine, and achieved no victory as hard and as holy. And now, when my beard is silver, and the Adam of old is expelled at the precincts of death; now, thinkest thou, that I can be reminded of the strife and temptation of yore, without bitterness and shame; when days were spent in fasting, and nights in fierce prayer; and in the face of woman I saw the devices of Satan?"

Edward coloured as he spoke, and his voice trembled with the accents of what seemed hate. Harold gazed on him mutely, and felt that at last he had won the secret that had ever perplexed him, and that in seeking to be above the humanity of love, the would-be saint had indeed turned love into the hues of hate—a thought of anguish, and a memory of pain.

The King recovered himself in a few moments, and said, with some dignity, "But God and his saints alone should know the secrets of the household. What I have said was wrung from me. Bury it in thy heart. Leave me, then, Harold, sith so it must be. Put thine earldom in order, attend to the monasteries and the poor, and return soon. As for Algar, what sayest thou?"

"I fear me," answered the large-souled Harold, with a victorious effort of justice over resentment, "that if you reject his suit you will drive him into some per-

ilous extremes. Despite his rash and proud spirit, he is brave against foes, and beloved by the ceorls, who oft like best the frank and hasty spirit. Wherefore some power and lordship it were wise to give, without dispossessing others, and not more wise than due, for his father served you well."

"And hath endowed more houses of God than any earl in the kingdom. But Algar is no Leofric. We will consider your words and heed them. Bless you, *beau frère!* and send in the cheapman. The thumb of St. Jude! What a gift to my new church of St. Peter! The thumb of St. Jude!—*Non nobis gloria! Sancta Maria!* The thumb of St. Jude!"

BOOK V

DEATH AND LOVE

CHAPTER I

Harold, without waiting once more to see Edith, nor even taking leave of his father, repaired to Dunwich,[1] the capital of his earldom. In his absence, the King wholly forgot Algar and his suit; and in the mean while the only lordships at his disposal, Stigand, the grasping bishop, got from him without an effort. In much wrath, Earl Algar, on the fourth day, assembling all the loose men-at-arms he could find around the metropolis, and at the head of a numerous disorderly band, took his way into Wales, with his young daughter Aldyth, to whom the crown of a Welch king was perhaps some comfort for the loss of the fair Earl; though the rumour ran that she had long since lost her heart to her father's foe.

Edith, after a long homily from the King, returned to Hilda; nor did her godmother renew the subject of the convent. All she said on parting was, "Even in youth the silver cord may be loosened, and the golden bowl may be broken; and rather perhaps in youth than in age, when the heart has grown hard, wilt thou recall with a sigh my counsels."

Godwin had departed to Wales; all his sons were at

[1] Dunwich, now swallowed up by the sea.—Hostile element to the house of Godwin.

their several lordships; Edward was left alone to his monks and relic-venders. And so months passed.

Now it was the custom with the old kings of England to hold state and wear their crowns thrice a year, at Christmas, at Easter, and at Whitsuntide; and in those times their nobles came round them, and there was much feasting and great pomp.

So, in the Easter of the year of our Lord 1053, King Edward kept his court at Windshore,[1] and Earl Godwin and his sons, and many others of high degree, left their homes to do honour to the King. And Earl Godwin came first to his house in London—near the Tower Palatine, in what is now called the Fleet—and Harold the Earl, and Tostig, and Leofwine, and Gurth, were to meet him there, and go thence, with the full state of their sub-thegns, and cnehts, and house-carles, their falcons, and their hounds, as become men of such rank, to the court of King Edward.

Earl Godwin sate with his wife, Githa, in a room out of the Hall, which looked on the Thames,—awaiting Harold, who was expected to arrive ere nightfall. Gurth had ridden forth to meet his brother, and Leofwine and Tostig had gone over to Southwark, to try their band-dogs on the great bear, which had been brought from the north a few days before, and was said to have hugged many good hounds to death, and a large train of thegns and house-carles had gone with them to see the sport; so that the old Earl and his lady the Dane sate alone. And there was a cloud upon Earl Godwin's large forehead, and he sate by the fire, spreading his hands before it, and looking thoughtfully on the flame, as it broke through the smoke which burst out into the *cover*, or hole in the roof.

[1] Windsor.

And in that large house there were no less than three "covers," or rooms, wherein fires could be lit in the centre of the floor; and the rafters above were blackened with the smoke; and in those good old days, ere chimneys, if existing, were much in use, "poses, and rheumatisms, and catarrhs," were unknown, so wholesome and healthful was the smoke. Earl Godwin's favourite hound, old, like himself, lay at his feet, dreaming, for it whined and was restless. And the Earl's old hawk, with its feathers all stiff and sparse, perched on the dossal of the Earl's chair: and the floor was pranked with rushes and sweet herbs—the first of the spring; and Githa's feet were on her stool, and she leaned her proud face on the small hand which proved her descent from the Dane, and rocked herself to and fro, and thought of her son Wolnoth in the court of the Norman.

"Githa," at last said the Earl, "thou hast been to me a good wife and a true, and thou hast borne me tall and bold sons, some of whom have caused us sorrow, and some joy; and in sorrow and in joy we have but drawn closer to each other. Yet when we wed thou wert in thy first youth, and the best part of my years was fled; and thou wert a Dane and I a Saxon; and thou a king's niece, and now a king's sister, and I but tracing two descents to thegn's rank."

Moved and marvelling at this touch of sentiment in the calm earl, in whom indeed such sentiment was rare, Githa roused herself from her musings, and said, simply and anxiously:

"I fear my lord is not well, that he speaks thus to Githa!"

The Earl smiled faintly.

"Thou art right with thy woman's wit, wife. And

for the last few weeks, though I said it not to alarm thee, I have had strange noises in my ears, and a surge, as of blood, to the temples."

"O Godwin! dear spouse," said Githa, tenderly, "and I was blind to the cause, but wondered why there was some change in thy manner! But I will go to Hilda to-morrow; she hath charms against all disease."

"Leave Hilda in peace, to give her charms to the young; age defies Wigh and Wicca. Now hearken to me. I feel that my thread is nigh spent, and, as Hilda would say, my Fylgia forewarns me that we are about to part. Silence, I say, and hear me. I have done proud things in my day; I have made kings and built thrones, and I stand higher in England than ever thegn or earl stood before. I would not, Githa, that the tree of my house, planted in the storm, and watered with lavish blood, should wither away."

The old Earl paused, and Githa said, loftily:

"Fear not that thy name will pass from the earth, or thy race from power. For fame has been wrought by thy hands, and sons have been born to thy embrace; and the boughs of the tree thou hast planted shall live in the sunlight when we its roots, O my husband, are buried in the earth."

"Githa," replied the Earl, "thou speakest as the daughter of kings and the mother of men; but listen to me, for my soul is heavy. Of these our sons, our first-born, alas! is a wanderer and outcast—Sweyn, once the beautiful and brave; and Wolnoth, thy darling, is a guest in the court of the Norman, our foe. Of the rest, Gurth is so mild and so calm, that I predict without fear that he will be warrior of fame, for the mildest in hall are ever the boldest in field. But

Gurth hath not the deep wit of these tangled times; and Leofwine is too light, and Tostig too fierce. So wife mine, of these our six sons, Harold alone, dauntless as Tostig, mild as Gurth, hath his father's thoughtful brain. And, if the King remains as aloof as now from his royal kinsman, Edward the Atheling, who" —the Earl hesitated and looked round—" who so near to the throne when I am no more, as Harold, the joy of the ceorls, and the pride of the thegns?—he whose tongue never falters in the Witan, and whose arm never yet hath known defeat in the field?"

Githa's heart swelled, and her cheek grew flushed.

" But what I fear the most," resumed the Earl, " is, not the enemy without, but the jealousy within. By the side of Harold stands Tostig, rapacious to grasp, but impotent to hold—able to ruin, strengthless to save."

" Nay, Godwin, my lord, thou wrongest our handsome son."

" Wife, wife," said the Earl, stamping his foot, " hear me and obey me; for my words on earth may be few, and while thou gainsayest me the blood mounts to my brain, and my eyes see through a cloud."

" Forgive me, sweet lord," said Githa, humbly.

" Mickle and sore it repents me that in their youth I spared not the time from my worldly ambition to watch over the hearts of my sons; and thou wert too proud of the surface without, to look well to the workings within, and what was once soft to the touch is now hard to the hammer. In the battle of life the arrows we neglect to pick up, Fate, our foe, will store in her quiver; we have armed her ourselves with the shafts—the more need to be ware with the shield. Wherefore, if thou survivest me, and if, as I forebode,

dissension break out between Harold and Tostig, I charge thee by memory of our love, and reverence for my grave, to deem wise and just all that Harold deems just and wise. For when Godwin is in the dust, his House lives alone in Harold. Heed me now, and heed ever. And so, while the day yet lasts, I will go forth into the marts and the guilds, and talk with the burgesses, and smile on their wives, and be, to the last, Godwin the smooth and the strong."

So saying, the old Earl arose, and walked forth with a firm step; and his old hound sprang up, pricked its ears, and followed him; the blinded falcon turned its head towards the clapping door, but did not stir from the dossel.

Then Githa again leant her cheek on her hand, and again rocked herself to and fro, gazing into the red flame of the fire,—red and fitful through the blue smoke,—and thought over her lord's words. It might be the third part of an hour after Godwin had left the house, when the door opened, and Githa, expecting the return of her sons, looked up eagerly, but it was Hilda, who stooped her head under the vault of the door; and behind Hilda came two of her maidens, bearing a small cyst, or chest. The Vala motioned to her attendants to lay the cyst at the feet of Githa, and that done, with lowly salutation they left the room.

The superstitions of the Danes were strong in Githa; and she felt an indescribable awe when Hilda stood before her, the red light playing on the Vala's stern marble face, and contrasting robes of funereal black. But, with all her awe, Githa, who, not educated like her daughter Edith, had few feminine resources, loved the visits of her mysterious kinswoman. She loved to live her youth over again in discourse on the wild cus-

toms and dark rites of the Dane; and even her awe itself had the charm which the ghost tale has to the child;—for the illiterate are ever children. So, recovering her surprise, and her first pause, she rose to welcome the Vala, and said:

"Hail, Hilda, and thrice hail! The day has been warm and the way long; and, ere thou takest food and wine, let me prepare for thee the bath for thy form, or the bath for thy feet. For as sleep to the young, is the bath to the old."

Hilda shook her head.

"Bringer of sleep am I, and the baths I prepare are in the halls of Valhalla. Offer not to the Vala the bath for mortal weariness, and the wine and the food meet for human guests. Sit thee down, daughter of the Dane, and thank thy new gods for the past that hath been thine. Not ours is the present, and the future escapes from our dreams; but the past is ours ever, and all eternity cannot revoke a single joy that the moment hath known."

Then seating herself in Godwin's large chair, she leant over her seid-staff, and was silent, as if absorbed in her thoughts.

"Githa," she said at last, "where is thy lord? I came to touch his hands and to look on his brow."

"He hath gone forth into the mart, and my sons are from home; and Harold comes hither, ere night, from his earldom."

A faint smile, as of triumph, broke over the lips of the Vala, and then as suddenly yielded to an expression of great sadness.

"Githa," she said, slowly, "doubtless thou rememberest in thy young days to have seen or heard of the terrible hell-maid Belsta?"

"Ay, ay," answered Githa shuddering; "I saw her once in gloomy weather, driving before her herds of dark grey cattle. Ay, ay; and my father beheld her ere his death, riding the air on a wolf, with a snake for a bridle. Why askest thou?"

"Is it not strange," said Hilda, evading the question, "that Belsta, and Heidr, and Hulla of old, the wolf-riders, the men-devourers, could win to the uttermost secrets of galdra, though applied only to purposes the direst and fellest to man, and that I, though ever in the future,—I, though tasking the Nornas not to afflict a foe, but to shape the careers of those I love, —I find, indeed, my predictions fulfilled; but how often, alas! only in horror and doom!"

"How so, kinswoman, how so?" said Githa, awed yet charmed in the awe, and drawing her chair nearer to the mournful sorceress. "Didst thou not foretell our return in triumph from the unjust outlawry, and, lo, it hath come to pass? and hast thou not" (here Githa's proud face flushed) "foretold also that my stately Harold shall wear the diadem of a king?"

"Truly, the first came to pass," said Hilda; "but——" she paused, and her eye fell on the cyst; then breaking off she continued, speaking to herself rather than to Githa—"And Harold's dream, what did that portend? the runes fail me, and the dead give no voice. And beyond one dim day, in which his betrothed shall clasp him with the arms of a bride, all is dark to my vision—dark—dark. Speak not to me, Githa; for a burthen, heavy as the stone on a grave, rests on a weary heart!"

A dead silence succeeded, till, pointing with her staff to the fire, the Vala said, "Lo, where the smoke and the flame contend—the smoke rises in dark gyres to

the air, and escapes, to join the wrack of clouds. From the first to the last we trace its birth and its fall; from the heart of the fire to the descent in the rain, so is it with human reason, which is not the light but the smoke; it struggles but to darken us; it soars but to melt in the vapour and dew. Yet, lo, the flame burns in our hearth till the fuel fails, and goes at last, none know whither. But it lives in the air though we see it not; it lurks in the stone and waits the flash of the steel; it coils round the dry leaves and sere stalks, and a touch re-illumines it; it plays in the marsh—it collects in the heavens—it appals us in the lightning —it gives warmth to the air—life of our life, and the element of all elements. O Githa, the flame is the light of the soul, the element everlasting; and it liveth still, when it escapes from our view; it burneth in the shapes to which it passes; it vanishes, but it's never extinct."

So saying, the Vala's lips again closed; and again both the women sate silent by the great fire, as it flared and flickered over the deep lines and high features of Githa, the Earl's wife, and the calm, unwrinkled, solemn face of the melancholy Vala.

CHAPTER II

While these conferences took place in the house of Godwin, Harold, on his way to London, dismissed his train to precede him to his father's roof, and, striking across the country, rode fast and alone towards the old Roman abode of Hilda. Months had elapsed since he had seen or heard of Edith. News at that time, I need not say, was rare and scarce, and limited to pub-

lic events, either transmitted by special nuncius or passing pilgrim, or borne from lip to lip by the talk of the scattered multitude. But even in his busy and anxious duties, Harold had in vain sought to banish from his heart the image of that young girl, whose life he needed no Vala to predict to him was interwoven with the fibres of his own. The obstacles which, while he yielded to, he held unjust and tyrannical, obstacles allowed by his reluctant reason and his secret ambition—not sanctified by conscience—only inflamed the deep strength of the solitary passion his life had known; a passion that, dating from the very childhood of Edith, had, often unknown to himself, animated his desire of fame, and mingled with his visions of power. Nor, though hope was far and dim, was it extinct. The legitimate heir of Edward the Confessor was a prince living in the Court of the Emperor, of fair repute, and himself wedded; and Edward's health, always precarious, seemed to forbid any very prolonged existence to the reigning king. Therefore, he thought that through the successor, whose throne would rest in safety upon Harold's support, he might easily obtain that dispensation from the Pope which he knew the present king would never ask—a dispensation rarely indeed, if ever, accorded to any subject, and which, therefore, needed all a king's power to back it.

So in that hope, and fearful lest it should be quenched for ever by Edith's adoption of the veil and the irrevocable vow, with a beating, disturbed, but joyful heart he rode over field and through forest to the old Roman house.

He emerged at length to the rear of the villa, and the sun, fast hastening to its decline, shone full upon

the rude columns of the Druid temple. And there, as he had seen her before, when he had first spoken of love and its barriers, he beheld the young maiden.

He sprang from his horse, and leaving the well-trained animal loose to browse on the waste land, he ascended the knoll. He stole noiselessly behind Edith, and his foot stumbled against the grave-stone of the dead Titan-Saxon of old. But the apparition, whether real or fancied, and the dream that had followed, had long passed from his memory, and no superstition was in the heart springing to the lips, that cried "Edith" once again.

The girl started, looked round, and fell upon his breast.

It was some moments before she recovered consciousness, and then, withdrawing herself gently from his arms, she leant for support against the Teuton altar.

She was much changed since Harold had seen her last: her cheek had grown pale and thin, and her rounded form seemed wasted; and sharp grief, as he gazed, shot through the soul of Harold.

"Thou hast pined, thou hast suffered," said he, mournfully: "and I, who would shed my life's blood to take one from thy sorrows, or add to one of thy joys, have been afar, unable to comfort, perhaps only a cause of thy woe."

"No, Harold," said Edith, faintly, "never of woe; always of comfort, even in absence. I have been ill, and Hilda hath tried rune and charm all in vain. But I am better, now that Spring hath come tardily forth, and I look on the fresh flowers, and hear the song of the birds."

But tears were in the sound of her voice, while she spoke.

"And they have not tormented thee again with the thoughts of the convent?"

"They? no;—but my soul, yes. O Harold, release me from my promise; for the time already hath come that thy sister foretold to me; the silver cord is loosened, and the golden bowl is broken, and I would fain take the wings of the dove, and be at peace."

"Is it so?—Is there peace in the home where the thought of Harold becomes a sin?"

"Not sin then and there, Harold, not sin. Thy sister hailed the convent when she thought of prayer for those she loved."

"Prate not to me of my sister!" said Harold, through his set teeth. "It is but a mockery to talk of prayer for the heart that thou thyself rendest in twain. Where is Hilda? I would see her."

"She hath gone to thy father's house with a gift; and it was to watch for her return that I sate on the green knoll."

The Earl then drew near and took her hand, and sate by her side, and they conversed long. But Harold saw with a fierce pang that Edith's heart was set upon the convent, and that even in his presence, and despite his soothing words, she was broken-spirited and despondent. It seemed as if her youth and life had gone from her, and the day had come in which she said, "There is no pleasure."

Never had he seen her thus; and, deeply moved as well as keenly stung, he rose at length to depart; her hand lay passive in his parting clasp, and a slight shiver went over her frame.

"Farewell, Edith; when I return from Windshore, I shall be at my old home yonder, and we shall meet again."

Edith's lips murmured inaudibly, and she bent her eyes to the ground.

Slowly Harold regained his steed, and as he rode on, he looked behind and waved oft his hand. But Edith sate motionless, her eyes still on the ground, and he saw not the tears that fell from them fast and burning; nor heard he the low voice that groaned amidst the heathen ruins, "Mary, sweet mother, shelter me from my own heart!"

The sun had set before Harold gained the long and spacious abode of his father. All around it lay the roofs and huts of the great Earl's special tradesmen, for even his goldsmith was but his freed ceorl. The house itself stretched far from the Thames inland, with several low courts built only of timber, rugged and shapeless, but filled with bold men, then the great furniture of a noble's halls.

Amidst the shouts of hundreds, eager to hold his stirrup, the Earl dismounted, passed the swarming hall, and entered the room, in which he found Hilda and Githa, and Godwin, who had preceded his entry but a few minutes.

In the beautiful reverence of son to father, which made one of the loveliest features of the Saxon character [1] (as the frequent want of it makes the most hateful of the Norman vices), the all-powerful Harold bowed his knee to the old Earl, who placed his hand on his head in benediction, and then kissed him on the cheek and brow.

"Thy kiss, too, dear mother," said the younger Earl; and Githa's embrace, if more cordial than her lord's, was not, perhaps, more fond.

[1] The chronicler, however, laments that the household ties, formerly so strong with the Anglo-Saxon, had been much weakened in the age prior to the Conquest.

"Greet Hilda, my son," said Godwin, "she hath brought me a gift, and she hath tarried to place it under thy special care. Thou alone must heed the treasure, and open the casket. But when and where, my kinswoman?"

"On the sixth day after thy coming to the King's hall," answered Hilda, not returning the smile with which Godwin spoke,—"on the sixth day, Harold, open the chest, and take out the robe which hath been spun in the house of Hilda for Godwin the Earl. And now, Godwin, I have clasped thine hand, and I have looked on thy brow, and my mission is done, and I must wend homeward."

"That shalt thou not, Hilda," said the hospitable Earl; "the meanest wayfarer hath a right to bed and board in this house for a night and a day, and thou wilt not disgrace us by leaving our threshold, the bread unbroken, and the couch unpressed. Old friend, we were young together, and thy face is welcome to me as the memory of former days."

Hilda shook her head, and one of those rare, and for that reason most touching, expressions of tenderness of which the calm and rigid character of her features, when in repose, seemed scarcely susceptible, softened her eye, and relaxed the firm lines of her lips.

"Son of Wolnoth," said she, gently, "not under thy roof-tree should lodge the raven of bode. Bread have I not broken since yestere'en, and sleep will be far from my eyes to-night. Fear not, for my people without are stout and armed, and for the rest there lives not the man whose arm can have power over Hilda."

She took Harold's hand as she spoke, and leading I shall be a whispered in his ear, "I would have a word again." part." Then, reaching the thresh-

old, she waved her hand thrice over the floor, and muttered in the Danish tongue a rude verse, which, translated, ran somewhat thus:

"All free from the knot
Glide the thread of the skein,
And rest to the labour,
And peace to the pain!"

"It is a death-dirge," said Githa, with whitening lips, but she spoke inly, and neither husband nor son heard her words.

Hilda and Harold passed in silence through the hall, and the Vala's attendants, with spears and torches, rose from the settles, and went before to the outer court, where snorted impatiently her black palfrey.

Halting in the midst of the court, she said to Harold, in a low voice:

"At sunset we part—at sunset we shall meet again. And behold, the star rises on the sunset; and the star, broader and brighter, shall rise on the sunset then! When thy hand draws the robe from the chest, think on Hilda, and know that at that hour she stands by the grave of the Saxon warrior, and that from the grave dawns the future. Farewell to thee!"

Harold longed to speak to her of Edith, but a strange awe at his heart chained his lips; so he stood silent by the great wooden gates of the rude house. The torches flamed round him, and Hilda's face seemed lurid in the glare. There he stood musing long after torch and ceorl had passed away, nor did he wake from his reverie till Gurth, springing from his panting horse, passed his arm round the Earl's shoulder, and cried:

"How did I miss thee, my brother? and why didst thou forsake thy train?"

"I will tell thee anon. Gurth, has my father ailed? There is that in his face which I like not."

"He hath not complained of misease," said Gurth, startled; "but now thou speakest of it, his mood hath altered of late, and he hath wandered much alone, or only with the old hound and the old falcon."

Then Harold turned back, and, his heart was full; and, when he reached the house, his father was sitting in the hall on his chair of state; and Githa sate on his right hand, and a little below her sate Tostig and Leofwine, who had come in from the bear-hunt by the river-gate, and were talking loud and merrily; and thegns and cnehts sate all around, and there was wassail as Harold entered. But the Earl looked only to his father, and he saw that his eyes were absent from the glee, and that he was bending his head over the old falcon, which sate on his wrist.

CHAPTER III

No subject of England, since the race of Cerdic sate on the throne, ever entered the court-yard of Windshore with such train and such state as Earl Godwin.—Proud of that first occasion, since his return, to do homage to him with whose cause that of England against the stranger was bound, all truly English at heart amongst the thegns of the land swelled his retinue. Whether Saxon or Dane, those who alike loved the laws and the soil, came from north and from south to the peaceful banner of the old Earl. But most of these were of the past generation, for the rising race were still dazzled by the pomp of the Norman; and the fashion of English manners, and the pride in Eng-

lish deeds, had gone out of date with long locks and bearded chins. Nor there were the bishops and abbots and the lords of the Church,—for dear to them already the fame of the Norman piety, and they shared the distaste of their holy King to the strong sense and homely religion of Godwin, who founded no convents, and rode to war with no relics round his neck. But they with Godwin were the stout and the frank and the free, in whom rested the pith and marrow of English manhood; and they who were against him were the blind and willing and fated fathers of slaves unborn.

Not then the stately castle we now behold, which is of the masonry of a prouder race, nor on the same site, but two miles distant on the winding of the river shore (whence it took its name), a rude building partly of timber and partly of Roman brick, adjoining a large monastery and surrounded by a small hamlet, constituted the palace of the saint-king.

So rode the Earl and his four fair sons, all abreast, into the court-yard of Windshore.[1] Now when King Edward heard the tramp of the steeds and the hum of the multitudes, as he sate in his closet with his abbots and priests, all in still contemplation of the thumb of St. Jude, the King asked:

"What army, in the day of peace, and the time of Easter, enters the gates of our palace?"

Then an abbot rose and looked out of the narrow window, and said with a groan:

[1] Some authorities state Winchester as the scene of these memorable festivities. Old Windsor Castle is supposed by Mr. Lysons to have occupied the site of a farm of Mr. Isherwood's surrounded by a moat, about two miles distant from New Windsor. He conjectures that it was still occasionally inhabited by the Norman kings till 1110. The ville surrounding it only contained ninety-five houses, paying gabel-tax, in the Norman survey.

"Army thou mayst well call it, O King!—and foes to us and to thee head the legions——"

"*Inprimis*," quoth our abbot the scholar; "thou speakest, I trow, of the wicked Earl and his sons."

The King's face changed. "Come they," said he, "with so large a train? This smells more of vaunt than of loyalty; naught—very naught."

"Alack!" said one of the conclave, "I fear me that the men of Belial will work us harm; the heathen are mighty, and——"

"Fear not," said Edward, with benign loftiness, observing that his guests grew pale, and himself, though often weak to childishness, and morally wavering and irresolute,—still so far king and gentleman, that he knew no craven fear of the body. "Fear not for me, my fathers; humble as I am, I am strong in the faith of heaven and its angels."

The Churchmen looked at each other, sly yet abashed; it was not precisely for the King that they feared.

Then spoke Alred, the good prelate and constant peacemaker—fair column and lone one of the fast-crumbling Saxon Church. "It is ill in you, brethren, to arraign the truth and good meaning of those who honour your King; and in these days that lord should ever be the most welcome who brings to the halls of his king the largest number of hearts, stout and leal."

"By your leave, brother Alred," said Stigand, who, though from motives of policy he had aided those who besought the King not to peril his crown by resisting the return of Godwin, benefited too largely by the abuses of the Church to be sincerely espoused to the cause of the strong-minded Earl; "By your leave, brother Alred, to every leal heart is a ravenous

mouth; and the treasures of the King are wellnigh drained in feeding these hungry and welcomeless visitors. Durst I counsel my lord I would pray him, as a matter of policy, to baffle this astute and proud Earl. He would fain have the King feast in public, that he might daunt him and the Church with the array of his friends."

"I conceive thee, my father," said Edward, with more quickness than habitual, and with the cunning, sharp though guileless, that belongs to minds undeveloped, "I conceive thee; it is good and most politic. This our orgulous Earl shall not have his triumph, and, so fresh from his exile, brave his King with the mundane parade of his power. Our health is our excuse for our absence from the banquet, and, sooth to say, we marvel much why Easter should be held a fitting time for feasting and mirth. Wherefore, Hugoline, my chamberlain, advise the Earl that to-day we keep fast till the sunset, when temperately, with eggs, bread, and fish, we will sustain Adam's nature. Pray him and his sons to attend us—they alone be our guests." And with a sound that seemed a laugh, or the ghost of a laugh, low and chuckling—for Edward had at moments an innocent humour which his monkish biographer disdained not to note,[1]—he flung himself back in his chair. The priests took the cue, and shook their sides heartily, as Hugoline left the room, not ill pleased, by the way, to escape an invitation to the eggs, bread, and fish.

Alred sighed; and said, "For the Earl and his sons, this is honour; but the other earls, and the thegns, will miss at the banquet him whom they design but to honour, and——"

[1] Ailred, *de Vit. Edward. Confess.*

"I have said," interrupted Edward, drily, and with a look of fatigue.

"And," observed another Churchman, with malice, "at least the young Earls will be humbled, for they will not sit with the King and their father, as they would in the Hall, and must serve my lord with napkin and wine."

"*Inprinis*," quoth our scholar the abbot, "that will be rare! I would I were by to see. But this Godwin is a man of treachery and wile, and my lord should beware of the fate of murdered Alfred, his brother!"

The King started, and pressed his hands to his eyes.

"How darest thou, Abbot Fatchere," cried Alred, indignantly; "How darest thou revive grief without remedy, and slander without proof?"

"Without proof?" echoed Edward, in a hollow voice. "He who could murder, could well stoop to forswear! Without proof before man; but did he try the ordeals of God?—did his feet pass the ploughshare?—did his hand grasp the seething iron? Verily, verily, thou didst wrong to name to me Alfred my brother! I shall see his sightless and gore-dropping sockets in the face of Godwin, this day, at my board."

The King rose in great disorder; and, after pacing the room some moments, disregardful of the silent and scared looks of his Churchmen, waved his hand, in sign to them to depart. All took the hint at once save Alred; but he, lingering the last, approached the King with dignity in his step and compassion in his eyes.

"Banish from thy breast, O King and son, thoughts unmeet, and of doubtful charity! All that man could know of Godwin's innocence or guilt—the suspicion of the vulgar—the acquittal of his peers—was known

to thee before thou didst seek his aid for thy throne, and didst take his child for thy wife. Too late is it now to suspect; leave thy doubts to the solemn day, which draws nigh to the old man, thy wife's father!"

"Ha!" said the king, seeming not to heed, or wilfully to misunderstand the prelate, "Ha! leave him to God;—I will!"

He turned away impatiently; and the prelate reluctantly departed.

CHAPTER IV

Tostig chafed mightily at the King's message; and, on Harold's attempt to pacify him, grew so violent that nothing short of the cold stern command of his father, who carried with him that weight of authority never known but to those in whom wrath is still and passion noiseless, imposed sullen peace on his son's rugged nature. But the taunts heaped by Tostig upon Harold disquieted the old Earl, and his brow was yet sad with prophetic care when he entered the royal apartments. He had been introduced into the King's presence but a moment before Hugoline led the way to the chamber of repast, and the greeting between King and Earl had been brief and formal.

Under the canopy of state were placed but two chairs, for the King and the Queen's father; and the four sons, Harold, Tostig, Leofwine, and Gurth, stood behind. Such was the primitive custom of ancient Teutonic kings; and the feudal Norman monarchs only enforced, though with more pomp and more rigour, the ceremonial of the forest patriarchs—youth to wait on age, and the ministers of the realm on those whom their policy had made chiefs in council and war.

The Earl's mind, already embittered by the scene with his sons, was chafed yet more by the King's unloving coldness; for it is natural to man, however worldly, to feel affection for those he has served, and Godwin had won Edward his crown; nor, despite his warlike though bloodless return, could even monk or Norman, in counting up the old Earl's crimes, say that he had ever failed in personal respect to the King he had made; nor over-great for subject, as the Earl's power must be confessed, will historian now be found to say that it had not been well for Saxon England if Godwin had found more favour with his King, and monk and Norman less.[1]

So the old Earl's stout heart was stung, and he looked from those deep, impenetrable eyes, mournfully upon Edward's chilling brow.

And Harold, with whom all household ties were strong, but to whom his great father was especially dear, watched his face and saw that it was very flushed. But the practised courtier sought to rally his spirits, and to smile and jest.

From smile and jest, the King turned and asked for wine. Harold, starting, advanced with the goblet; as he did so, he stumbled with one foot, but lightly recovered himself with the other; and Tostig laughed scornfully at Harold's awkwardness.

The old Earl observed both stumble and laugh, and willing to suggest a lesson to both his sons, said—

[1] "Is it astonishing," asked the people (referring to Edward's preference of the Normans), "that the author and support of Edward's reign should be indignant at seeing new men from a foreign nation raised above him, and yet never does he utter one harsh word to the man whom he himself created king?"—HAZLITT'S THIERRY, vol. i. p. 126.

This is the English account (*versus* the Norman). There can be little doubt that it is the true one.

laughing pleasantly—"Lo, Harold, how the left foot saves the right!—so one brother, thou seest, helps the other!"[1]

King Edward looked up suddenly.

"And so, Godwin, also, had my brother Alfred helped me, hadst thou permitted."

The old Earl, galled to the quick, gazed a moment on the King, and his cheek was purple, and his eyes seemed bloodshot.

"O Edward!" he exclaimed, "thou speakest to me hardly and unkindly of thy brother Alfred, and often hast thou thus more than hinted that I caused his death."

The King made no answer.

"May this crumb of bread choke me," said the Earl, in great emotion, "if I am guilty of thy brother's blood!"[2]

But scarcely had the bread touched his lips, when his eyes fixed, the long warning symptoms were fulfilled. And he fell to the ground, under the table, sudden and heavy, smitten by the stroke of apoplexy.

Harold and Gurth sprang forward; they drew their father from the ground. His face, still deep-red with streaks of purple, rested on Harold's breast; and the son, kneeling, called in anguish on his father: the ear was deaf.

Then said the King, rising:

"It is the hand of God: remove him!" and he swept from the room, exulting.

[1] Henry of Huntingdon, &c.
[2] Henry of Huntingdon; Bromt. Chron., &c.

CHAPTER V

For five days and five nights did Godwin lie speechless.[1] And Harold watched over him night and day. And the leaches[2] would not bleed him, because the season was against it, in the increase of the moon and the tides; but they bathed his temples with wheat flour boiled in milk, according to a prescription which an angel in a dream[3] had advised to another patient; and they placed a plate of lead on his breast, marked with five crosses, saying a paternoster over each cross; together with other medical specifics in great esteem.[4] But, nevertheless, five days and five nights did Godwin lie speechless; and the leaches then feared that human skill was in vain.

The effect produced on the court, not more by the Earl's death-stroke than the circumstances preceding it, was such as defies description. With Godwin's old comrades in arms it was simple and honest grief; but with all those under the influence of the priests, the event was regarded as a direct punishment from Heaven. The previous words of the King, repeated by Edward to his monks, circulated from lip to lip, with sundry exaggerations as it travelled: and the superstition of the day had the more excuse, inasmuch as the speech of Godwin touched near upon the defiance of one of the most popular ordeals of the accused,—viz. that called the "corsned," in which a piece of bread was given to the supposed criminal;

[1] Hoveden.

[2] The origin of the word leach (physician), which has puzzled some inquirers, is from *lich* or *leac,* a body. *Leich* is the old Saxon word for surgeon.

[3] Sharon Turner, vol. i. p. 472.

[4] Fosbrooke.

if he swallowed it with ease he was innocent; if it stuck in his throat, or choked him, nay, if he shook and turned pale, he was guilty. Godwin's words had appeared to invite the ordeal, God had heard and stricken down the presumptuous perjurer!

Unconscious, happily, of these attempts to blacken the name of his dying father, Harold, towards the grey dawn succeeding the fifth night, thought that he heard Godwin stir in his bed. So he put aside the curtain, and bent over him. The old Earl's eyes were wide open, and the red colour had gone from his cheeks, so that he was pale as death.

"How fares it, dear father?" asked Harold.

Godwin smiled fondly, and tried to speak, but his voice died in a convulsive rattle. Lifting himself up, however, with an effort, he pressed tenderly the hand that clasped his own, leant his head on Harold's breast, and so gave up the ghost.

When Harold was at last aware that the struggle was over, he laid the grey head gently on the pillow; he closed the eyes, and kissed the lips, and knelt down and prayed. Then, seating himself at a little distance, he covered his face with his mantle.

At this time his brother Gurth, who had chiefly shared watch with Harold,—for Tostig, foreseeing his father's death, was busy soliciting thegn and earl to support his own claims to the earldom about to be vacant; and Leofwine had gone to London on the previous day to summon Githa who was hourly expected —Gurth, I say, entered the room on tiptoe, and seeing his brother's attitude, guessed that all was over. He passed on to the table, took up the lamp, and looked long on his father's face. That strange smile of the dead, common alike to innocent and guilty, had al-

ready settled on the serene lips; and that no less strange transformation from age to youth, when the wrinkles vanish, and the features come out clear and sharp from the hollows of care and years, had already begun. And the old man seemed sleeping in his prime.

So Gurth kissed the dead, as Harold had done before him, and came up and sate himself by his brother's feet, and rested his head on Harold's knee; nor would he speak till, appalled by the long silence of the Earl, he drew away the mantle from his brother's face with a gentle hand, and the large tears were rolling down Harold's cheeks.

"Be soothed, my brother," said Gurth; "our father has lived for glory, his age was prosperous, and his years more than those which the Psalmist allots to man. Come and look on his face, Harold; its calm will comfort thee."

Harold obeyed the hand that led him like a child; in passing towards the bed, his eye fell upon the cyst which Hilda had given to the old Earl, and a chill shot through his veins.

"Gurth," said he, "is not this the morning of the sixth day in which we have been at the King's Court?"

"It is the morning of the sixth day."

Then Harold took forth the key which Hilda had given him, and unlocked the cyst, and there lay the white winding-sheet of the dead, and a scroll. Harold took the scroll, and bent over it, reading by the mingled light of the lamp and the dawn:

"All hail, Harold, heir of Godwin the great, and Githa the king-born! Thou hast obeyed Hilda, and thou knowest now that Hilda's eyes read the future,

and her lips speak the dark words of truth. Bow thy heart to the Vala, and mistrust the wisdom that sees only the things of the daylight. As the valour of the warrior and the song of the scald, so is the lore of the prophetess. It is not of the body, it is soul within soul; it marshals events and men, like the valour—it moulds the air into substance, like the song. Bow thy heart to the Vala. Flowers bloom over the grave of the dead. And the young plant soars high, when the king of the woodland lies low!"

CHAPTER VI

The sun rose, and the stairs and passages without were filled with the crowds that pressed to hear news of the Earl's health. The doors stood open, and Gurth led in the multitude to look their last on the hero of council and camp, who had restored with strong hand and wise brain the race of Cerdic to the Saxon throne. Harold stood by the bed-head silent, and tears were shed and sobs were heard. And many a thegn who had before half believed in the guilt of Godwin as the murderer of Alfred, whispered in gasps to his neighbour:

"There is no weregeld for manslaying on the head of him who smiles so in death on his old comrades in life!"

Last of all lingered Leofric, the great Earl of Mercia; and when the rest had departed, he took the pale hand, that lay heavy on the coverlid, in his own, and said:

"Old foe, often stood we in Witan and field against each other; but few are the friends for whom Leofric

would mourn as he mourns for thee. Peace to thy soul! Whatever its sins, England should judge thee mildly, for England beat in each pulse of thy heart, and with thy greatness was her own!"

Then Harold stole round the bed, and put his arms round Leofric's neck, and embraced him. The good old Earl was touched, and he laid his tremulous hands on Harold's brown locks and blessed him.

"Harold," he said, "thou succeedest to thy father's power: let thy father's foes be thy friends. Wake from thy grief, for thy country now demands thee,—the honour of thy House, and the memory of the dead. Many even now plot against thee and thine. Seek the King, demand as thy right thy father's earldom, and Leofric will back thy claim in the Witan."

Harold pressed Leofric's hand, and raising it to his lips replied: "Be our Houses at peace henceforth and for ever."

Tostig's vanity indeed misled him, when he dreamed that any combination of Godwin's party could meditate supporting his claims against the popular Harold—nor less did the monks deceive themselves, when they supposed that, with Godwin's death, the power of his family would fall.

There was more than even the unanimity of the chiefs of the Witan, in favour of Harold; there was that universal noiseless impression throughout all England, Danish and Saxon, that Harold was now the sole man on whom rested the state—which, whenever it so favours one individual, is irresistible. Nor was Edward himself hostile to Harold, whom alone of that House, as we have before said, he esteemed and loved.

Harold was at once named Earl of Wessex; and relinquishing the earldom he held before, he did not hesi-

tate as to the successor to be recommended in his place. Conquering all jealousy and dislike for Algar, he united the strength of his party in favour of the son of Leofric, and the election fell upon him. With all his hot errors, the claims of no other Earl, whether from his own capacities or his father's services, were so strong; and his election probably saved the state from a great danger, in the results of that angry mood and that irritated ambition with which he had thrown himself into the arms of England's most valiant aggressor, Gryffyth, King of North Wales.

To outward appearance, by this election, the House of Leofric—uniting in father and son the two mighty districts of Mercia and the East Anglians—became more powerful than that of Godwin; for, in that last House, Harold was now the only possessor of one of the great earldoms, and Tostig and the other brothers had no other provision beyond the comparatively insignificant lordships they held before. But if Harold had ruled no earldom at all, he had still been immeasurably the first man in England—so great was the confidence reposed in his valour and wisdom. He was of that height in himself, that he needed no pedestal to stand on.

The successor of the first great founder of a House succeeds to more than his predecessor's power, if he but know how to wield and maintain it. For who makes his way to greatness without raising foes at every step? and who ever rose to power supreme, without grave cause for blame? But Harold stood free from the enmities his father had provoked, and pure from the stains that slander or repute cast upon his father's name. The sun of the yesterday had shone through cloud; the sun of the day rose in a clear firma-

ment. Even Tostig recognised the superiority of his brother; and after a strong struggle between baffled rage and covetous ambition, yielded to him, as to a father. He felt that all Godwin's House was centred in Harold alone; and that only from his brother (despite his own daring valour and despite his alliance with the blood of Charlemagne and Alfred, through the sister of Matilda, the Norman duchess,) could his avarice of power be gratified.

"Depart to thy home, my brother," said Earl Harold to Tostig, "and grieve not that Algar is preferred to thee. For, even had his claim been less urgent, ill would it have beseemed us to arrogate the lordships of all England as our dues. Rule thy lordship with wisdom: gain the love of thy lithsmen. High claims hast thou in our father's name, and moderation now will but strengthen thee in the season to come. Trust on Harold somewhat, on thyself more. Thou hast but to add temper and judgment to valour and zeal, to be worthy mate of the first earl in England. Over my father's corpse I embraced my father's foe. Between brother and brother shall there not be love, as the best bequest of the dead?"

"It shall not be my fault, if there be not," answered Tostig, humbled though chafed. And he summoned his men and returned to his domains.

CHAPTER VII

Fair, broad, and calm set the sun over the western woodlands. Hilda stood on the mount, and looked with undazzled eyes on the sinking orb. Beside her, Edith reclined on the sward, and seemed with idle hand tracing characters in the air. The girl had

grown paler still, since Harold last parted from her on the same spot, and the same listless and despondent apathy stamped her smileless lips and her bended head.

"See, child of my heart," said Hilda, addressing Edith, while she still gazed on the western luminary, "see, the sun goes down to the far deeps, where Rana and Ægir [1] watch over the worlds of the sea; but with morning he comes from the halls of the Asas—the golden gates of the East—and joy comes in his train. And yet thou thinkest, sad child, whose years have scarce passed into woman, that the sun, once set, never comes back to life. But even while we speak, thy morning draws near, and the dunness of cloud takes the hues of the rose!"

Edith's hand paused from its vague employment, and fell droopingly on her knee;—she turned with an unquiet and anxious eye to Hilda, and after looking some moments wistfully at the Vala, the colour rose to her cheek, and she said in a voice that had an accent half of anger:

"Hilda, thou art cruel!"

"So is Fate!" answered the Vala. "But men call not Fate cruel when it smiles on their desires. Why callest thou Hilda cruel, when she reads in the setting sun the runes of thy coming joy!"

"There is no joy for me," returned Edith, plaintively; "and I have that on my heart," she added, with a sudden and almost fierce change of tone, "which at

[1] *Ægir*, the Scandinavian god of the ocean. Not one of the Aser, or Asas (the celestial race), but sprung from the giants. *Ran* or *Rana*, his wife, a more malignant character, who caused shipwrecks, and drew to herself, by a net, all that fell into the sea. The offspring of this marriage were nine daughters, who became the Billows, the Currents, and the Storms.

last I will dare to speak. I reproach thee, Hilda, that thou hast marred all my life, that thou hast duped me with dreams, and left me alone in despair."

"Speak on," said Hilda, calmly, as a nurse to a froward child.

"Hast thou not told me, from the first dawn of my wondering reason, that my life and lot were interwoven with—with (the word, mad and daring, must out)—with those of Harold the peerless? But for that, which my infancy took from thy lips as a law, I had never been so vain and so frantic! I had never watched each play of his face, and treasured each word from his lips; I had never made my life but part of his life—all my soul but the shadow of his sun. But for that, I had hailed the calm of the cloister—but for that, I had glided in peace to my grave. And now—*now*, O Hilda—" Edith paused, and that break had more eloquence than any words she could command. "And," she resumed quickly, "thou knowest that these hopes were but dreams—that the law ever stood between him and me—and that it was guilt to love him."

"I knew the law," answered Hilda, "but the law of fools is to the wise as the cobweb swung over the brake to the wing of the bird. Ye are sibbe to each other, some five times removed; and therefore an old man at Rome saith that ye ought not to wed. When the shavelings obey the old man at Rome, and put aside their own wives and frillas,[1] and abstain from

[1] *Frilla,* the Danish word for a lady who, often with the wife's consent, was added to the domestic circle by the husband. The word is here used by Hilda in a general sense of reproach. Both marriage and concubinage were common amongst the Anglo-Saxon priesthood, despite the unheeded canons; and so, indeed, they were with the French clergy.

the wine cup, and the chase, and the brawl, I will stoop to hear of their laws,—with disrelish it may be, but without scorn.[1] It is no sin to love Harold; and no monk and no law shall prevent your union on the day appointed to bring ye together, form and heart."

"Hilda! Hilda! madden me not with joy," cried Edith, starting up in rapturous emotion, her young face dyed with blushes, and all her renovated beauty so celestial that Hilda herself was almost awed, as if by the vision of Freya, the northern Venus, charmed by a spell from the halls of Asgard.

"But that day is distant," renewed the Vala.

"What matters! what matters!" cried the pure child of Nature; "I ask but hope. Enough,—oh! enough, if we were but wedded on the borders of the grave!"

"Lo, then," said Hilda, "behold, the sun of thy life dawns again!"

As she spoke, the Vala stretched her arm, and through the intersticed columns of the fane, Edith saw the large shadow of a man cast over the still sward. Presently into the space of the circle came Harold, her beloved. His face was pale with grief yet recent; but, perhaps, more than ever, dignity was in his step and command on his brow, for he felt that now alone with him rested the might of Saxon England. And what royal robe so invests with imperial majesty the form of a man as the grave sense of power responsible, in an earnest soul?

"Thou comest," said Hilda, "in the hour I predicted; at the setting of the sun and the rising of the star."

[1] Hilda, not only as a heathen, but as a Dane, would be no favourer of monks; they were unknown in Denmark at that time, and the Danes held them in odium.—*Ord. Vital.*, lib. vii.

"Vala," said Harold, gloomily, "I will not oppose my sense to thy prophecies; for who shall judge of that power of which he knows not the elements? or despise the marvel of which he cannot detect the imposture? But leave me, I pray thee, to walk in the broad light of the common day. These hands are made to grapple with things palpable, and these eyes to measure the forms that front my way. In my youth, I turned in despair or disgust from the subtleties of the schoolmen, which split upon hairs the brains of Lombard and Frank; in my busy and stirring manhood entangle me not in the meshes which confuse all my reason, and sicken my waking thoughts into dreams of awe. Mine be the straight path and the plain goal!"

The Vala gazed on him with an earnest look, that partook of admiration, and yet more of gloom; but she spoke not, and Harold resumed:

"Let the dead rest, Hilda,—proud names with glory on earth and shadows escaped from our ken, submissive to mercy in heaven. A vast chasm have my steps overleapt since we met, O Hilda—sweet Edith; a vast chasm, but a narrow grave." His voice faltered a moment, and again he renewed,—"Thou weepest, Edith; ah, how thy tears console me! Hilda, hear me! I love thy grandchild—loved her by irresistible instinct since her blue eyes first smiled on mine. I loved her in her childhood, as in her youth —in the blossom as in the flower. And thy grandchild loves me. The laws of the Church proscribe our marriage, and therefore we parted; but I feel, and thine Edith feels, that the love remains as strong in absence: no other will be her wedded lord, no other my wedded wife. Therefore, with heart made soft by

sorrow, and, in my father's death, sole lord of my fate, I return, and say to thee in her presence, 'Suffer us to hope still!' The day may come when under some king less enthralled than Edward by formal Church laws, we may obtain from the Pope absolution for our nuptials—a day, perhaps, far off; but we are both young, and love is strong and patient: we can wait."

"O Harold," exclaimed Edith, "we can wait!"

"Have I not told thee, son of Godwin," said the Vala, solemnly, "that Edith's skein of life was inwoven with thine? Dost thou deem that my charms have not explored the destiny of the last of my race? Know that it is in the decrees of the fates that ye are to be united, never more to be divided. Know that there shall come a day, though I can see not its morrow, and it lies dim and afar, which shall be the most glorious of thy life, and on which Edith and fame shall be thine,—the day of thy nativity, on which hitherto all things have prospered with thee. In vain against the stars preach the mone and the priest: what shall be, shall be. Wherefore, take hope and joy, O Children of Time! And now, as I join your hands, I betroth your souls."

Rapture unalloyed and unprophetic, born of love deep and pure, shone in the eyes of Harold, as he clasped the hand of his promised bride. But an involuntary and mysterious shudder passed over Edith's frame, and she leant close, close, for support upon Harold's breast. And, as if by a vision, there rose distinct in her memory a stern brow, a form of power and terror—the brow and the form of him who but once again in her waking life the Prophetess had told her she should behold. The vision passed away in the warm clasp of those protecting arms; and looking

up into Harold's face, she there beheld the mighty and deep delight that transfused itself at once into her own soul.

Then Hilda, placing one hand over their heads, and raising the other towards heaven, all radiant with bursting stars, said in her deep and thrilling tones:

"Attest the betrothal of these young hearts, O ye Powers that draw nature to nature by spells which no galdra can trace, and have wrought in the secrets of creation no mystery so perfect as love,—Attest it, thou temple, thou altar!—attest it, O sun and O air! While the forms are divided, may the souls cling together—sorrow with sorrow, and joy with joy. And when, at length, bride and bridegroom are one,—O stars, may the trouble with which ye are charged have exhausted its burthen; may no danger molest, and no malice disturb, but, over the marriage-bed, shine in peace, O ye stars!"

Up rose the moon. May's nightingale called its mate from the breathless boughs; and so Edith and Harold were betrothed by the grave of the son of Cerdic. And from the line of Cerdic had come, since Ethelbert, all the Saxon kings who with sword and with sceptre had reigned over Saxon England.

BOOK VI

AMBITION

CHAPTER I

There was great rejoicing in England. King Edward had been induced to send Alred the prelate[1] to the court of the German Emperor, for his kinsman and namesake, Edward Atheling, the son of the great Ironsides. In his childhood, this Prince, with his brother Edmund, had been committed by Canute to the charge of his vassal, the King of Sweden; and it has been said (though without sufficient authority), that Canute's design was, that they should be secretly made away with. The King of Sweden, however, forwarded the children to the court of Hungary; they were there honourably reared and received. Edmund died young, without issue. Edward married a daughter of the German Emperor, and during the commotions in England, and the successive reigns of Harold Harefoot, Hardicanute, and the Confessor, had remained forgotten in his exile, until now suddenly recalled to England as the heir presumptive of his childless namesake. He arrived with Agatha his wife, one infant son, Edgar, and two daughters, Margaret and Christina.

Great were the rejoicings. The vast crowd that had followed the royal visitors in their procession to the

[1] Chron. Knyghton.

old London palace (not far from St. Paul's) in which they were lodged, yet swarmed through the streets, when two thegns who had personally accompanied the Atheling from Dover, and had just taken leave of him, now emerged from the palace, and with some difficulty made their way through the crowded streets.

The one in the dress and short hair imitated from the Norman, was our old friend Godrith, whom the reader may remember as the rebuker of Taillefer, and the friend of Mallet de Graville; the other, in a plain linen Saxon tunic, and the gonna worn on state occasions, to which he seemed unfamiliar, but with heavy gold bracelets on his arms, long haired and bearded, was Vebba, the Kentish thegn, who had served as nuncius from Godwin to Edward.

"Troth and faith!" said Vebba, wiping his brow, "this crowd is enow to make plain man stark wode. I would not live in London for all the gauds in the goldsmith's shops, or all the treasures in King Edward's vaults. My tongue is as parched as a hayfield in the weyd-month.[1] Holy Mother be blessed! I see a *Cumen-hus*[2] open; let us in and refresh ourselves with a horn of ale."

"Nay, friend," quoth Godrith, with a slight disdain, "such are not the resorts of men of our rank. Tarry yet awhile, till we arrive near the bridge by the river-side; there, indeed, you will find worthy company and dainty cheer."

"Well, well, I am at your hest, Godrith," said the Kent man, sighing; "my wife and my sons will be sure to ask me what sights I have seen, and I may as well know from thee the last tricks and ways of this hurly-burly town."

[1] *Weyd-month.* Meadow month, June.
[2] *Cumen-hus.* Tavern.

Godrith, who was master of all the fashions in the reign of our lord King Edward, smiled graciously, and the two proceeded in silence, only broken by the sturdy Kent man's exclamations; now of anger when rudely jostled, now of wonder and delight when, amidst the throng, he caught sight of a gleeman, with his bear or monkey, who took advantage of some space near convent garden, or Roman ruin, to exhibit his craft; till they gained a long low row of booths, most pleasantly situated to the left of this side London bridge, and which was appropriated to the celebrated cookshops, that even to the time of Fitzstephen retained their fame and their fashion.

Between the shops and the river was a space of grass worn brown and bare by the feet of the customers, with a few clipped trees with vines trained from one to the other in arcades, under cover of which were set tables and settles. The place was thickly crowded, and but for Godrith's popularity amongst the attendants, they might have found it difficult to obtain accommodation. However, a new table was soon brought forth, placed close by the cool margin of the water, and covered in a trice with tankards of hippocras, pigment, ale, and some Gascon, as well as British wines: varieties of the delicious cake-bread for which England was then renowned; while viands, strange to the honest eye and taste of the wealthy Kent man, were served on spits.

"What bird is this?" said he, grumbling.

"O enviable man, it is a Phrygian attagen[1] that thou art about to taste for the first time; and when thou hast recovered that delight, I commend to thee a Moorish compound, made of eggs and roes of carp

[1] Fitzstephen.

from the old Southweorc stewponds, which the cooks here dress notably."

"Moorish!—Holy Virgin!" cried Vebba, with his mouth full of the Phrygian attagen, "how came anything Moorish in our Christian island?"

Godrith laughed outright.

"Why, our cook here is Moorish; the best singers in London are Moors. Look yonder! see those grave comely Saracens!"

"Comely, quotha, burnt and black as a charred pine-pole!" grunted Vebba; "well, who are they?"

"Wealthy traders; thanks to whom, our pretty maids have risen high in the market."[1]

"More the shame," said the Kent man; "that selling of English youth to foreign masters, whether male or female, is a blot on the Saxon name."

"So saith Harold our Earl, and so preach the monks," returned Godrith. "But thou, my good friend, who art fond of all things that our ancestors did, and hast sneered more than once at my Norman robe and cropped hair, *thou* shouldst not be the one to find fault with what our fathers have done since the days of Cerdic."

"Hem," said the Kent man, a little perplexed, "certainly old manners are the best, and I suppose there is some good reason for this practice, which I, who never trouble myself about matters that concern me not, do not see."

"Well, Vebba, and how likest thou the Atheling? he is of the old line," said Godrith.

Again the Kent man looked perplexed, and had re-

[1] William of Malmesbury speaks with just indignation of the Anglo-Saxon custom of selling female servants, either to public prostitution, or foreign slavery.

course to the ale, which he preferred to all more delicate liquor, before he replied:

"Why, he speaks English worse than King Edward! and as for his boy Edgar, the child can scarce speak English at all. And then their German carles and cnehts!—An I had known what manner of folk they were, I had not spent my *mancuses* in running from my homestead to give them the welcome. But they told me that Harold the good Earl had made the King send for them: and whatever the Earl counselled must, I thought, be wise, and to the weal of sweet England."

"That is true," said Godrith with earnest emphasis, for, with all his affectation of Norman manners, he was thoroughly English at heart, and now among the staunchest supporters of Harold, who had become no less the pattern and pride of the young nobles than the darling of the humbler population,—"that is true —and Harold showed us his noble English heart when he so urged the King to his own loss."

As Godrith thus spoke, nay, from the first mention of Harold's name, two men richly clad, but with their bonnets drawn far over their brows, and their long gonnas so worn as to hide their forms, who were seated at a table behind Godrith and had thus escaped his attention, had paused from their wine-cups, and they now listened with much earnestness to the conversation that followed.

"How to the Earl's loss?" asked Vebba.

"Why, simple thegn," answered Godrith, "why, suppose that Edward had refused to acknowledge the Atheling as his heir, suppose the Atheling had remained in the German court, and our good King died suddenly,—who, thinkest thou, could succeed to the English throne?"

"Marry, I have never thought of that at all," said the Kent man, scratching his head.

"No, nor have the English generally; yet whom could we choose but Harold?"

A sudden start from one of the listeners was checked by the warning finger of the other; and the Kent man exclaimed:

"Body o' me! But we have never chosen king (save the Danes) out of the line of Cerdic. These be new cranks, with a vengeance; we shall be choosing German, or Saracen, or Norman next!"

"Out of the line of Cerdic! but that line is gone, root and branch, save the Atheling, and he thou seest is more German than English. Again I say, failing the Atheling, whom could we choose but Harold, brother-in-law to the King: descended through Githa from the royalties of the Norse, the head of all armies under the Herr-ban, the chief who has never fought without victory, yet who has always preferred conciliation to conquest—the first counsellor in the Witan —the first man in the realm—who but Harold? answer me, staring Vebba?"

"I take in thy words slowly," said the Kent man, shaking his head, "and after all, it matters little who is king, so he be a good one. Yes, I see now that the Earl was a just and generous man when he made the King send for the Atheling. Drink-hæl! long life to them both!"

"Was-hæl," answered Godrith, draining his hippocras to Vebba's more potent ale. "Long life to them both! may Edward the Atheling reign, but Harold the Earl rule! Ah, then, indeed, we may sleep without fear of fierce Algar and still fiercer Gryffyth the Walloon—who now, it is true, are stilled for the moment,

thanks to Harold—but not more still than the smooth waters in Gwyned, that lie just above the rush of a torrent."

"So little news hear I," said Vebba, "and in Kent so little are we plagued with the troubles elsewhere, (for there Harold governs us, and the hawks come not where the eagles hold eyrie!)—that I will thank thee to tell me something about our old Earl for a year,[1] Algar the restless, and this Gryffyth the Welch King, so that I may seem a wise man when I go back to my homestead."

"Why, thou knowest at least that Algar and Harold were ever opposed in the Witan, and hot words thou hast heard pass between them!"

"Marry, yes! But Algar was as little match for Earl Harold in speech as in sword play."

Now again one of the listeners started, (but it was not the same as the one before,) and muttered an angry exclamation.

"Yet is he a troublesome foe," said Godrith, who did not hear the sound Vebba had provoked, "and a thorn in the side both of the Earl and of England; and sorrowful for both England and Earl was it, that Harold refused to marry Aldyth, as it is said his father, wise Godwin, counselled and wished."

"Ah! but I have heard scops and harpers sing pretty songs that Harold loves Edith the Fair, a wondrous proper maiden, they say!"

"It is true; and for the sake of his love, he played ill for his ambition."

"I like him the better for that," said the honest

[1] It will be remembered that Algar governed Wessex, which principality included Kent, during the year of Godwin's outlawry.

Kent man: "why does he not marry the girl at once? she hath broad lands, I know, for they run from the Sussex shore into Kent."

"But they are cousins five times removed, and the Church forbids the marriage; nevertheless Harold lives only for Edith; they have exchanged the true-lofa,[1] and it is whispered that Harold hopes the Athel-ing, when he comes to be King, will get him the Pope's dispensation. But to return to Algar; in a day most unlucky he gave his daughter to Gryffyth, the most turbulent sub-king the land ever knew, who, it is said, will not be content till he has won all Wales for himself without homage or service, and the Marches to boot. Some letters between him and Earl Algar, to whom Harold had secured the earldom of the East Angles, were discovered, and in a Witan at Winchester thou wilt doubtless have heard, (for thou didst not, I know, leave thy lands to attend it,) that Algar[2] was out-lawed."

[1] *Trulofa,* from which comes our popular corruption "true lover's knot;" *à vetere Danico* trulofa, i.e., *fidem do,* to pledge faith.—HICKE's *Thesaur.*

"A knot, among the ancient northern nations, seems to have been the emblem of love, faith, and friendship."—BRANDE's *Pop. Antiq.*

[2] The *Saxon Chronicle* contradicts itself as to Algar's out-lawry, stating in one passage that he was outlawed without any kind of guilt, and in another that he was outlawed as *swike,* or traitor, and that he made a confession of it before all the men there gathered. His treason, however, seems nat-urally occasioned by his close connection with Gryffyth, and proved by his share in that King's rebellion. Some of our historians have unfairly assumed that his outlawry was at Harold's instigation. Of this there is not only no proof, but one of the best authorities among the chroniclers says just the contrary—that Harold did all he could to intercede for him; and it is certain that he was fairly tried and condemned by the Witan, and afterwards restored by the concurrent articles of agreement between Harold and Leofric. Harold's policy with his own countrymen stands out very markedly prominent in the annals of the time; it was invariably that of conciliation.

"Oh, yes, these are stale tidings; I heard thus much from a palmer—and then Algar got ships from the Irish, sailed to North Wales, and beat Rolf, the Norman Earl, at Hereford. Oh, yes, I heard that, and," added the Kent man, laughing, "I was not sorry to hear that my old Earl Algar, since he is a good and true Saxon, beat the cowardly Norman,—more shame to the King for giving a Norman the ward of the Marches!"

"It was a sore defeat to the King and to England," said Godrith, gravely. "The great Minster of Hereford built by King Athelstan was burned and sacked by the Welch; and the crown itself was in danger, when Harold came up at the head of the Fyrd. Hard is it to tell the distress and the marching and the camping, and the travail, and destruction of men, and also of horses, which the English endured [1] till Harold came; and then luckily came also the good old Leofric, and Bishop Alred the peacemaker, and so strife was patched up—Gryffyth swore oaths of faith to King Edward, and Algar was inlawed; and there for the nonce rests the matter now. But well I ween that Gryffyth will never keep troth with the English, and that no hand less strong than Harold's can keep in check a spirit as fiery as Algar's: therefore did I wish that Harold might be King."

"Well," quoth the honest Kent man, "I hope, nevertheless, that Algar will sow his wild oats, and leave the Walloons to grow the hemp for their own halters; for, though he is not of the height of our Harold, he is a true Saxon, and we liked him well enow when he ruled us. And how is our Earl's brother Tostig esteemed by the Northmen? It must be hard

[1] Saxon Chron., verbatim.

to please those who had Siward of the strong arm for their Earl before."

"Why, at first, when (at Siward's death in the wars for young Malcolm) Harold secured to Tostig the Northumbrian earldom, Tostig went by his brother's counsel, and ruled well and won favour. Of late I hear that the Northmen murmur. Tostig is a man indeed dour and haughty."

After a few more questions and answers on the news of the day, Vebba rose and said:

"Thanks for thy good fellowship; it is time for me now to be jogging homeward. I left my ceorls and horses on the other side the river, and must go after them. And now forgive me my bluntness, fellow-thegn, but ye young courtiers have plenty of need for your *mancuses*, and when a plain countryman like me comes sight-seeing, he ought to stand payment; wherefore," here he took from his belt a great leathern purse, "wherefore, as these outlandish birds and heathenish puddings must be dear fare—"

"How!" said Godrith, reddening, "thinkest thou so meanly of us thegns of Middlesex as to deem we cannot entertain thus humbly a friend from a distance? Ye Kent men I know are rich. But keep your pennies to buy stuffs for your wife, my friend."

The Kent man, seeing he had displeased his companion, did not press his liberal offer,—put up his purse, and suffered Godrith to pay the reckoning. Then, as the two thegns shook hands, he said:

"But I should like to have said a kind word or so to Earl Harold—for he was too busy and too great for me to come across him in the old palace yonder. I have a mind to go back and look for him at his own house."

"You will not find him there," said Godrith, "for I know that as soon as he hath finished his conference with the Atheling, he will leave the city; and I shall be at his own favourite manse over the water at sunset, to take orders for repairing the forts and dykes on the Marches. You can tarry awhile and meet us; you know his old lodge in the forest land?"

"Nay, I must be back and at home ere night, for all things go wrong when the master is away. Yet, indeed, my good wife will scold me for not having shaken hands with the handsome Earl."

"Thou shalt not come under that sad infliction," said the good-natured Godrith, who was pleased with the thegn's devotion to Harold, and who, knowing the great weight which Vebba (homely as he seemed) carried in his important county, was politically anxious that the Earl should humour so sturdy a friend,—"Thou shalt not sour thy wife's kiss, man. For look you, as you ride back you will pass by a large old house, with broken columns at the back."

"I have marked it well," said the thegn, "when I have gone that way, with a heap of queer stones, on a little hillock, which they say the witches or the Britons heaped together."

"The same. When Harold leaves London, I trow well towards that house will his road wend; for there lives Edith the swan's-neck, with her awful grandam the Wicca. If thou art there a little after noon, depend on it thou wilt see Harold riding that way."

"Thank thee heartily, friend Godrith," said Vebba, taking his leave, "and forgive my bluntness if I laughed at thy cropped head, for I see thou art as good a Saxon as e'er a franklin of Kent—and so the saints keep thee."

Vebba then strode briskly over the bridge; and Godrith, animated by the wine he had drunk, turned gaily on his heel to look amongst the crowded tables for some chance friend with whom to while away a hour or so at the games of hazard then in vogue.

Scarce had he turned, when the two listeners, who, having paid their reckoning, had moved under shade of one of the arcades, dropped into a boat which they had summoned to the margin by a noiseless signal, and were rowed over the water. They preserved a silence which seemed thoughtful and gloomy until they reached the opposite shore; then one of them, pushing back his bonnet, showed the sharp and haughty features of Algar.

"Well, friend of Gryffyth," said he, with a bitter accent, "thou hearest that Earl Harold counts so little on the oaths of thy King, that he intends to fortify the Marches against him; and thou hearest also, that nought save a life, as fragile as the reed which thy feet are trampling, stands between the throne of England and the only Englishman who could ever have humbled my son-in-law to swear oath of service to Edward."

"Shame upon that hour," said the other, whose speech, as well as the gold collar round his neck, and the peculiar fashion of his hair, betokened him to be Welch. "Little did I think that the great son of Llewellyn, whom our bards had set above Roderic Mawr, would ever have acknowledged the sovereignty of the Saxon over the hills of Cymry."

"Tut, Meredydd," answered Algar, "thou knowest well that no Cymrian ever deems himself dishonoured by breaking faith with the Saxon; and we shall yet see the lions of Gryffyth scaring the sheepfolds of Hereford."

"So be it," said Meredydd, fiercely. "And Harold shall give to his Atheling the Saxon land, shorn at least of the Cymrian kingdom."

"Meredydd," said Algar, with a seriousness that seemed almost solemn, "no Atheling will live to rule these realms! Thou knowest that I was one of the first to hail the news of his coming—I hastened to Dover to meet him. Methought I saw death writ on his countenance, and I bribed the German leach who attends him to answer my questions; the Atheling knows it not, but he bears within him the seeds of a mortal complaint. Thou wottest well what cause I have to hate Earl Harold; and were I the only man to oppose his way to the throne, he should not ascend it but over my corpse. But when Godrith, his creature, spoke, I felt that he spoke the truth; and, the Atheling dead, on no head but Harold's can fall the crown of Edward."

"Ha!" said the Cymrian chief, gloomily; "thinkest thou so indeed?"

"I think it not; I know it. And for that reason, Meredydd, we must wait not till he wields against us all the royalty of England. As yet, while Edward lives, there is hope. For the King loves to spend wealth on relics and priests, and is slow when the *mancuses* are wanted for fighting men. The King too, poor man! is not so ill-pleased at my outbursts as he would fain have it thought; he thinks, by pitting earl against earl, that he himself is the stronger.[1] While Edward lives, therefore, Harold's arm is half crippled; wherefore, Meredydd, ride thou, with good speed, back to King Gryffyth, and tell him all that I have told thee. Tell him that our time to strike the blow and

[1] Hume.

renew the war will be amidst the dismay and confusion that the Atheling's death will occasion. Tell him, that if we can entangle Harold himself in the Welch defiles, it will go hard but what we shall find some arrow or dagger to pierce the heart of the invader. And were Harold but slain—who then would be king in England? The line of Cerdic gone—the House of Godwin lost in Earl Harold, (for Tostig is hated in his own domain, Leofwine is too light, and Gurth is too saintly for such ambition)—who then, I say, can be king in England but Algar, the heir of the great Leofric? And I, as King of England, will set all Cymry free, and restore to the realm of Gryffyth the shires of Hereford and Worcester. Ride fast, O Meredydd, and heed well all I have said."

"Dost thou promise and swear, that wert thou king of England, Cymry should be free from all service?"

"Free as air, free as under Arthur and Uther: I swear it. And remember well how Harold addressed the Cymrian chiefs, when he accepted Gryffyth's oaths of service."

"Remember it—ay," cried Meredydd, his face lighting up with intense ire and revenge; "the stern Saxon said, 'Heed well, ye chiefs of Cymry, and thou Gryffyth the King, that if again ye force, by ravage and rapine, by sacrilege and murther, the majesty of England to enter your borders, duty must be done: God grant that your Cymrian lion may leave us in peace—if not, it is mercy to human life that bids us cut the talons, and draw the fangs.'"

"Harold, like all calm and mild men, ever says less than he means," returned Algar; "and were Harold king, small pretext would he need for cutting the talons and drawing the fangs."

"It is well," said Meredydd, with a fierce smile. "I will now go to my men who are lodged yonder; and it is better that thou shouldst not be seen with me."

"Right; so St. David be with you—and forget not a word of my message to Gryffyth my son-in-law."

"Not a word," returned Meredydd, as with a wave of his hand he moved towards an hostelry, to which, as kept by one of their own countrymen, the Welch habitually resorted in the visits to the capital which the various intrigues and dissensions in their unhappy land made frequent.

The chief's train, which consisted of ten men, all of high birth, were not drinking in the tavern—for sorry customers to mine host were the abstemious Welch. Stretched on the grass under the trees of an orchard that backed the hostelry, and utterly indifferent to all the rejoicings that animated the population of Southwark and London, they were listening to a wild song of the old hero-days from one of their number; and round them grazed the rough shagged ponies which they had used for their journey. Meredydd, approaching, gazed round, and seeing no stranger was present, raised his hand to hush the song, and then addressed his countrymen briefly in Welsh—briefly, but with a passion that was evident in his flashing eyes and vehement gestures. The passion was contagious; they all sprang to their feet with a low but fierce cry, and in a few moments they had caught and saddled their diminutive palfreys, while one of the band, who seemed singled out by Meredydd, sallied forth alone from the orchard, and took his way, on foot, to the bridge. He did not tarry there long; at the sight of a single horseman, whom a shout of welcome, on that swarming

thoroughfare, proclaimed to be Earl Harold, the Welchman turned, and with a fleet foot regained his companions.

Meanwhile Harold, smilingly, returned the greetings he received, cleared the bridge, passed the suburbs, and soon gained the wild forest land that lay along the great Kentish-road. He rode somewhat slowly, for he was evidently in deep thought; and he had arrived about half-way towards Hilda's house when he heard behind quick pattering sounds, as of small unshod hoofs: he turned, and saw the Welchmen at the distance of some fifty yards. But at that moment there passed, along the road in front, several persons bustling into London to share in the festivities of the day. This seemed to disconcert the Welch in the rear, and, after a few whispered words, they left the high road and entered the forest land. Various groups from time to time continued to pass along the thoroughfare. But still, ever through the glades, Harold caught glimpses of the riders; now distant, now near. Sometimes he heard the snort of their small horses, and saw a fierce eye glaring through the bushes; then, as at the sight or sound of approaching passengers, the riders wheeled, and shot off through the brakes.

The Earl's suspicions were aroused; for (though he knew of no enemy to apprehend, and the extreme severity of the laws against robbers made the high roads much safer in the latter days of the Saxon domination than they were for centuries under that of the subsequent dynasty, when Saxon thegns themselves had turned kings of the greenwood,) the various insurrections in Edward's reign had necessarily thrown upon society many turbulent disbanded mercenaries.

Harold was unarmed, save the spear which, even on occasions of state, the Saxon noble rarely laid aside, and the ateghar in his belt; and, seeing now that the road had become deserted, he set spurs to his horse, and was just in sight of the Druid temple, when a javelin whizzed close by his breast, and another transfixed his horse, which fell head foremost to the ground.

The Earl gained his feet in an instant, and that haste was needed to save his life; for while he rose ten swords flashed around him. The Welchmen had sprung from their palfreys as Harold's horse fell. Fortunately for him, only two of the party bore javelins, (a weapon which the Welch wielded with deadly skill,) and, those already wasted, they drew their short swords, which were probably imitated from the Romans, and rushed upon him in simultaneous onset. Versed in all the weapons of the time, with his right hand seeking by his spear to keep off the rush, with the ateghar in his left parrying the strokes aimed at him, the brave Earl transfixed the first assailant, and sore wounded the next; but his tunic was dyed red with three gashes, and his sole chance of life was in the power yet left him to force his way through the ring. Dropping his spear, shifting his ateghar into the right hand, wrapping round his left arm his gonna as a shield, he sprang fiercely on the onslaught, and on the flashing swords. Pierced to the heart fell one of his foes—dashed to the earth another—from the hand of a third (dropping his own ateghar) he wrenched the sword. Loud rose Harold's cry for aid, and swiftly he strode towards the hillock, turning back, and striking as he turned; and again fell a foe, and again new blood oozed through his own garb. At

that moment his cry was echoed by a shriek so sharp and so piercing that it startled the assailants, it arrested the assault; and, ere the unequal strife could be resumed, a woman was in the midst of the fray; a woman stood dauntless between the Earl and his foes.

"Back! Edith. Oh, God! Back, back!" cried the Earl, recovering all his strength in the sole fear which that strife had yet stricken into his bold heart; and drawing Edith aside with his strong arm, he again confronted the assailants.

"Die!" cried, in the Cymrian tongue, the fiercest of the foes, whose sword had already twice drawn the Earl's blood; "Die, that Cymry may be free!"

Meredydd sprang, with him sprang the survivors of his band; and, by a sudden movement, Edith had thrown herself on Harold's breast, leaving his right arm free, but sheltering his form with her own.

At that sight every sword rested still in air. These Cymrians, hesitating not at the murder of the man whose death seemed to their false virtue a sacrifice due to their hopes of freedom, were still the descendants of Heroes, and the children of noble Song, and their swords were harmless against a woman. The same pause which saved the life of Harold, saved that of Meredydd; for the Cymrian's lifted sword had left his breast defenceless, and Harold, despite his wrath, and his fears for Edith, touched by that sudden forbearance, forbore himself the blow.

"Why seek ye my life?" said he. "Whom in broad England hath Harold wronged?"

That speech broke the charm, revived the suspense of vengeance. With a sudden aim, Meredydd smote at the head which Edith's embrace left unprotected. The sword shivered on the steel of that which parried

A woman stood dauntless between the Earl and his foes.

the stroke, and the next moment, pierced to the heart, Meredydd fell to the earth, bathed in his gore. Even as he fell, aid was at hand. The ceorls in the Roman house had caught the alarm, and were hurrying down the knoll, with arms snatched in haste, while a loud whoop broke from the forest land hard by; and a troop of horse, headed by Vebba, rushed through the bushes and brakes. Those of the Welch still surviving, no longer animated by their fiery chief, turned on the instant, and fled with that wonderful speed of foot which characterised their active race; calling, as they fled, to their Welch pigmy steeds, which, snorting loud, and lashing out, came at once to the call. Seizing the nearest at hand, the fugitives sprang to selle, while the animals unchosen paused by the corpses of their former riders, neighing piteously, and shaking their long manes. And then, after wheeling round and round the coming horsemen, with many a plunge, and lash, and savage cry, they darted after their companions, and disappeared amongst the bushwood. Some of the Kentish men gave chase to the fugitives, but in vain; for the nature of the ground favoured flight. Vebba, and the rest, now joined by Hilda's lithsmen, gained the spot where Harold, bleeding fast, yet strove to keep his footing, and, forgetful of his own wounds, was joyfully assuring himself of Edith's safety. Vebba dismounted, and recognising the Earl, exclaimed:

"Saints in heaven! are we in time? You bleed—you faint!—Speak, Lord Harold. How fares it?"

"Blood enow yet left here for our merrie England!" said Harold, with a smile. But as he spoke, his head drooped, and he was borne senseless into the house of Hilda.

CHAPTER II

The Vala met them at the threshold, and testified so little surprise at the sight of the bleeding and unconscious Earl, that Vebba, who had heard strange tales of Hilda's unlawful arts, half-suspected that those wild-looking foes, with their uncanny, diminutive horses, were imps conjured by her to punish a wooer to her grandchild—who had been perhaps too successful in the wooing. And fears so reasonable were not a little increased when Hilda, after leading the way up the steep ladder to the chamber in which Harold had dreamed his fearful dream, bade them all depart, and leave the wounded man to her care.

"Not so," said Vebba, bluffly. "A life like this is not to be left in the hands of woman, or wicca. I shall go back to the great town, and summon the Earl's own leach. And I beg thee to heed, meanwhile, that every head in this house shall answer for Harold's."

The great Vala, and highborn Hleafdian, little accustomed to be accosted thus, turned round abruptly, with so stern an eye and so imperious a mien, that even the stout Kent man felt abashed. She pointed to the door opening on the ladder, and said, briefly:

"Depart! Thy lord's life hath been saved already, and by woman. Depart!"

"Depart, and fear not for the Earl, brave and true friend in need," said Edith, looking up from Harold's pale lips, over which she bent; and her sweet voice so touched the good thegn, that, murmuring a blessing on her fair face, he turned and departed.

Hilda then proceeded, with a light and skilful hand,

to examine the wounds of her patient. She opened the tunic, and washed away the blood from four gaping orifices on the breast and shoulders. And as she did so, Edith uttered a faint cry, and falling on her knees, bowed her head over the drooping hand, and kissed it with stifling emotions, of which perhaps grateful joy was the strongest; for over the heart of Harold was punctured, after the fashion of the Saxons, a device—and that device was the knot of betrothal, and in the centre of the knot was graven the word "Edith."

CHAPTER III

Whether owing to Hilda's runes, or to the merely human arts which accompanied them, the Earl's recovery was rapid, though the great loss of blood he had sustained left him awhile weak and exhausted. But, perhaps, he blessed the excuse which detained him still in the house of Hilda, and under the eyes of Edith.

He dismissed the leach sent to him by Vebba, and confided, not without reason, to the Vala's skill. And how happily went his hours beneath the old Roman roof!

It was not without a superstition, more characterised, however, by tenderness than awe, that Harold learned that Edith had been undefinably impressed with a foreboding of danger to her betrothed, and all that morning she had watched his coming from the old legendary hill. Was it not in that watch that his good Fylgia had saved his life?

Indeed, there seemed a strange truth in Hilda's assertions, that in the form of his betrothed, his tutelary

spirit lived and guarded. For smooth every step, and bright every day, in his career, since their troth had been plighted. And gradually the sweet superstition had mingled with human passion to hallow and refine it. There was a purity and a depth in the love of these two, which, if not uncommon in women, is most rare in men.

Harold, in sober truth, had learned to look on Edith as on his better angel; and, calming his strong manly heart in the hour of temptation, would have recoiled, as a sacrilege, from aught that could have sullied that image of celestial love. With a noble and sublime patience, of which perhaps only a character so thoroughly English in its habits of self-control and steadfast endurance could have been capable, he saw the months and the years glide away, and still contented himself with hope;—hope, the sole godlike joy that belongs to men!

As the opinion of an age influences even those who affect to despise it, so, perhaps, this holy and unselfish passion was preserved and guarded by that peculiar veneration for purity which formed the characteristic fanaticism of the last days of the Anglo-Saxons,—when still, as Aldhelm had previously sung in Latin less barbarous than perhaps any priest in the reign of Edward could command:

> "Virginitas castam servans sine crimine carnem
> Cætera virtutem vincit præconia laudi—
> Spiritus altithroni templum sibi vindicat almus;" [1]

[1] "The chaste who blameless keep unsullied fame,
Transcend all other worth, all other praise.
The Spirit, high enthroned, has made their hearts
His sacred temple."
SHARON TURNER'S *Translation of Aldhelm*, vol. iii. p. 366. It is curious to see how, even in Latin, the poet preserves the *alliterations* that characterised the Saxon muse.

when, amidst a great dissoluteness of manners, alike common to Church and laity, the opposite virtues were, as is invariable in such epochs of society, carried by the few purer natures into heroic extremes. "And as gold, the adorner of the world, springs from the sordid bosom of earth, so chastity, the image of gold, rose bright and unsullied from the clay of human desire." [1]

And Edith, though yet in the tenderest flush of beautiful youth, had, under the influence of that sanctifying and scarce earthly affection, perfected her full nature as woman. She had learned so to live in Harold's life, that—less, it seemed, by study than intuition—a knowledge graver than that which belonged to her sex and her time, seemed to fall upon her soul—fall as the sunlight falls on the blossoms, expanding their petals, and brightening the glory of their hues.

Hitherto, living under the shade of Hilda's dreary creed, Edith, as we have seen, had been rather Christian by name and instinct than acquainted with the doctrines of the Gospel, or penetrated by its faith. But the soul of Harold lifted her own out of the Valley of the Shadow up to the Heavenly Hill. For the character of their love was so pre-eminently Christian, so, by the circumstances that surrounded it—so by hope and self-denial, elevated out of the empire, not only of the senses, but even of that sentiment which springs from them, and which made the sole refined and poetic element of the heathen's love, that but for Christianity it would have withered and died. It required all the aliment of prayer; it needed that patient endurance which comes from the soul's consciousness of immortality; it could not have resisted earth, but

[1] Slightly altered from Aldhelm.

from the forts and armies it won from heaven. Thus from Harold might Edith be said to have taken her very soul. And with the soul, and through the soul, woke the mind from the mists of childhood.

In the intense desire to be worthy the love of the foremost man of her land; to be the companion of his mind, as well as the mistress of his heart, she had acquired, she knew not how, strange stores of thought, and intelligence, and pure, gentle wisdom. In opening to her confidence his own high aims and projects, he himself was scarcely conscious how often he confided but to consult—how often and how insensibly she coloured his reflections and shaped his designs. Whatever was highest and purest, *that*, Edith ever, as by instinct, beheld as the wisest. She grew to him like a second conscience, diviner than his own. Each, therefore, reflected virtue on the other, as planet illumines planet.

All these years of probation then, which might have soured a love less holy, changed into weariness a love less intense, had only served to wed them more intimately soul to soul; and in that spotless union what happiness there was! what rapture in word and glance, and the slight, restrained caress of innocence, beyond all the transports love only human can bestow!

CHAPTER IV

It was a bright still summer noon, when Harold sate with Edith amidst the columns of the Druid temple, and in the shade which those vast and mournful relics of a faith departed cast along the sward. And there, conversing over the past, and planning the

future, they had sate long, when Hilda approached from the house, and entering the circle, leant her arm upon the altar of the war-god, and gazing on Harold with a calm triumph in her aspect, said:

"Did I not smile, son of Godwin, when, with thy short-sighted wisdom, thou didst think to guard thy land and secure thy love, by urging the monk-king to send over the seas for the Atheling? Did I not tell thee, 'Thou dost right, for in obeying thy judgment thou art but the instrument of fate; and the coming of the Atheling shall speed thee nearer to the ends of thy life, but not from the Atheling shalt thou take the crown of thy love, and not by the Atheling shall the throne of Athelstan be filled'?"

"Alas," said Harold, rising in agitation, "let me not hear of mischance to that noble prince. He seemed sick and feeble when I parted from him; but joy is a great restorer, and the air of the native land gives quick health to the exile."

"Hark!" said Hilda, "you hear the passing bell for the soul of the son of Ironsides!"

The mournful knell, as she spoke, came dull from the roofs of the city afar, borne to their ears by the exceeding stillness of the atmosphere. Edith crossed herself, and murmured a prayer according to the custom of the age; then raising her eyes to Harold, she murmured, as she clasped her hands:

"Be not saddened, Harold; hope still."

"Hope!" repeated Hilda, rising proudly from her recumbent position, "Hope! in that knell from St. Paul's, dull indeed is thine ear, O Harold, if thou hearest not the joy-bells that inaugurate a future king!"

The Earl started; his eyes shot fire; his breast heaved.

"Leave us, Edith," said Hilda, in a low voice; and after watching her grandchild's slow reluctant steps descend the knoll, she turned to Harold, and leading him towards the gravestone of the Saxon chief, said: "Rememberest thou the spectre that rose from this mound?—rememberest thou the dream that followed it?"

"The spectre, or deceit of mine eye, I remember well," answered the Earl; "the dream, not;—or only in confused and jarring fragments."

"I told thee then, that I could not unriddle the dream by the light of the moment; and that the dead who slept below never appeared to men, save for some portent of doom to the house of Cerdic. The portent is fulfilled; the Heir of Cerdic is no more. To whom appeared the great Scin-læca, but to him who shall lead a new race of kings to the Saxon throne!"

Harold breathed hard, and the colour mounted bright and glowing to his cheek and brow.

"I cannot gainsay thee, Vala. Unless, despite all conjecture, Edward should be spared to earth till the Atheling's infant son acquires the age when bearded men will acknowledge a chief,[1] I look round in Eng-

[1] It is impossible to form any just view of the state of parties, and the position of Harold in the later portions of this work, unless the reader will bear constantly in mind the fact that, from the earliest period, minors were set aside as a matter of course, by the Saxon customs. Henry observes that, in the whole history of the Heptarchy, there is but one example of a minority, and that a short and unfortunate one; so, in the later times, the great Alfred takes the throne, to the exclusion of the infant son of his elder brother. Only under very peculiar circumstances, backed, as in the case of Edmund Ironsides, by precocious talents and manhood on the part of the minor, were there exceptions to the general laws of succession. The same rule obtained with the earldoms; the fame, power, and popularity of Siward could not transmit his Northumbrian earldom to his infant son Waltheof, so gloomily renowned in a subsequent reign.

land for the coming king, and all England reflects but mine own image."

His head rose erect as he spoke, and already the brow seemed august, as if circled by the diadem of the Basileus.

"And if it be so," he added, "I accept that solemn trust, and England shall grow greater in my greatness."

"The flame breaks at last from the smouldering fuel!" cried the Vala, "and the hour I so long foretold to thee hath come!"

Harold answered not, for high and kindling emotions deafened him to all but the voice of a grand ambition, and the awakening joy of a noble heart.

"And then—and then," he exclaimed, "I shall need no mediator between nature and monkcraft;—then, O Edith, the life thou hast saved will indeed be thine!" He paused, and it was a sign of the change that an ambition long repressed, but now rushing into the vent legitimately open to it, had already begun to work in the character hitherto so self-reliant, when he said in a low voice, "But that dream which hath so long lain locked, not lost, in my mind; that dream of which I recall only vague remembrances of danger yet defiance, trouble yet triumph,—canst thou unriddle it, O Vala, into auguries of success?"

"Harold," answered Hilda, "thou didst hear at the close of thy dream, the music of the hymns that are chaunted at the crowning of a king,—and a crowned king shalt thou be; yet fearful foes shall assail thee —foreshown in the shapes of a lion and raven, that came in menace over the blood-red sea. The two stars in the heaven betoken that the day of thy birth was also the birthday of a foe, whose star is fatal to

thine; and they warn thee against a battle-field, fought on the day when those stars shall meet. Farther than this the mystery of thy dream escapes from my lore; —wouldst thou learn thyself, from the phantom that sent the dream;—stand by my side at the grave of the Saxon hero, and I will summon the Scin-læca to counsel the living. For what to the Vala the dead may deny, the soul of the brave on the brave may bestow!"

Harold listened with a serious and musing attention which his pride or his reason had never before accorded to the warnings of Hilda. But his sense was not yet fascinated by the voice of the charmer, and he answered with his wonted smile, so sweet yet so haughty:

"A hand outstretched to a crown should be armed for the foe; and the eye that would guard the living should not be dimmed by the vapours that encircle the dead."

CHAPTER V

But from that date changes, slight, yet noticeable and important, were at work both in the conduct and character of the great Earl.

Hitherto he had advanced on his career without calculation; and nature, not policy, had achieved his power. But henceforth he began thoughtfully to cement the foundations of his House, to extend the area, to strengthen the props. Policy now mingled with the justice that had made him esteemed, and the generosity that had won him love. Before, though by temper conciliatory, yet, through honesty, indifferent to the enmities he provoked, in his adherence to what his conscience approved, he now laid himself

out to propitiate all ancient feuds, soothe all jealousies, and convert foes into friends. He opened constant and friendly communication with his uncle Sweyn, King of Denmark; he availed himself sedulously of all the influence over the Anglo-Danes which his mother's birth made so facile. He strove also, and wisely, to conciliate the animosities which the Church had cherished against Godwin's house: he concealed his disdain of the monks and monkridden: he showed himself the Church's patron and friend; he endowed largely the convents, and especially one at Waltham, which had fallen into decay, though favourably known for the piety of its brotherhood. But if in this he played a part not natural to his opinions, Harold could not, even in simulation, administer to evil. The monasteries he favoured were those distinguished for purity of life, for benevolence to the poor, for bold denunciation of the excesses of the great. He had not, like the Norman, the grand design of creating in the priesthood a college of learning, a school of arts; such notions were unfamiliar in homely, unlettered England. And Harold, though for his time and his land no mean scholar, would have recoiled from favouring a learning always made subservient to Rome; always at once haughty and scheming, and aspiring to complete domination over both the souls of men and the thrones of kings. But his aim was, out of the elements he found in the natural kindliness existing between Saxon priest and Saxon flock, to rear a modest, virtuous, homely clergy, not above tender sympathy with an ignorant population. He selected as examples for his monastery at Waltham, two low-born humble brothers, Osgood and Ailred; the one known for the courage with which he had gone through the

land, preaching to abbot and thegn the emancipation of the theowes, as the most meritorious act the safety of the soul could impose; the other, who, originally a clerk, had, according to the common custom of the Saxon clergy, contracted the bonds of marriage, and with some eloquence had vindicated that custom against the canons of Rome, and refused the offer of large endowments and thegn's rank to put away his wife. But on the death of that spouse he had adopted the cowl, and while still persisting in the lawfulness of marriage to the unmonastic clerks, had become famous for denouncing the open concubinage which desecrated the holy office, and violated the solemn vows, of many a proud prelate and abbot.

To these two men (both of whom refused the abbacy of Waltham) Harold committed the charge of selecting the new brotherhood established there. And the monks of Waltham were honoured as saints throughout the neighbouring district, and cited as examples to all the Church.

But though in themselves the new politic arts of Harold seemed blameless enough, *arts* they were, and as such they corrupted the genuine simplicity of his earlier nature. He had conceived for the first time an ambition apart from that of service to his country. It was no longer only to serve the land, it was to serve it as its ruler, that animated his heart and coloured his thoughts. Expediencies began to dim to his conscience the healthful loveliness of Truth. And now, too, gradually, that empire which Hilda had gained over his brother Sweyn began to sway this man, heretofore so strong in his sturdy sense. The future became to him a dazzling mystery, into which his conjectures plunged themselves more and more. He had

not yet stood in the Runic circle and invoked the dead; but the spells were around his heart, and in his own soul had grown up the familiar demon.

Still Edith reigned alone, if not in his thoughts at least in his affections; and perhaps it was the hope of conquering all obstacles to his marriage that mainly induced him to propitiate the Church, through whose agency the object he sought must be attained; and still that hope gave the brightest lustre to the distant crown. But he who admits Ambition to the companionship of Love, admits a giant that outstrides the gentler footsteps of its comrade.

Harold's brow lost its benign calm. He became thoughtful and abstracted. He consulted Edith less, Hilda more. Edith seemed to him now not wise enough to counsel. The smile of his Fylgia, like the light of the star upon a stream, lit the surface, but could not pierce to the deep.

Meanwhile, however, the policy of Harold throve and prospered. He had already arrived at that height, that the least effort to make power popular redoubled its extent. Gradually all voices swelled the chorus in his praise; gradually men became familiar to the question, "If Edward dies before Edgar, the grandson of Ironsides, is of age to succeed, where can we find a king like Harold?"

In the midst of this quiet but deepening sunshine of his fate, there burst a storm, which seemed destined either to darken his day or to disperse every cloud from the horizon. Algar, the only possible rival to his power—the only opponent no arts could soften—Algar, whose hereditary name endeared him to the Saxon laity, whose father's most powerful legacy was the love of the Saxon Church, whose martial and tur-

bulent spirit had only the more elevated him in the esteem of the warlike Danes in East Anglia (the earldom in which he had succeeded Harold), by his father's death, lord of the great principality of Mercia —availed himself of that new power to break out again into rebellion. Again he was outlawed, again he leagued with the fiery Gryffyth. All Wales was in revolt; the Marches were invaded and laid waste. Rolf, the feeble Earl of Hereford, died at this critical juncture, and the Normans and hirelings under him mutinied against other leaders; a fleet of vikings from Norway ravaged the western coasts, and sailing up the Menai, joined the ships of Gryffyth, and the whole empire seemed menaced with dissolution, when Edward issued his Herr-bann, and Harold at the head of the royal armies marched on the foe.

Dread and dangerous were those defiles of Wales; amidst them had been foiled or slaughtered all the warriors under Rolf the Norman; no Saxon armies had won laurels in the Cymrian's own mountain home within the memory of man; nor had any Saxon ships borne the palm from the terrible vikings of Norway. Fail, Harold, and farewell the crown!—succeed, and thou hast on thy side the *ultimam rationem regum* (the last argument of kings), the heart of the army over which thou art chief.

CHAPTER VI

It was one day in the height of summer that two horsemen rode slowly, and conversing with each other in friendly wise, notwithstanding an evident difference of rank and of nation, through the lovely country which formed the Marches of Wales. The younger

of these men was unmistakably a Norman; his cap only partially covered the head, which was shaven from the crown to the nape of the neck,[1] while in front the hair, closely cropped, curled short and thick round a haughty but intelligent brow. His dress fitted close to his shape, and was worn without mantle; his leggings were curiously crossed in the fashion of a tartan, and on his heels were spurs of gold. He was wholly unarmed; but behind him and his companion, at a little distance, his war-horse, completely caparisoned, was led by a single squire, mounted on a good Norman steed; while six Saxon theowes, themselves on foot, conducted three sumpter-mules, somewhat heavily laden, not only with the armour of the Norman knight, but panniers containing rich robes, wines, and provender. At a few paces farther behind, marched a troop, light-armed, in tough hides, curiously tanned, with axes swung over their shoulders, and bows in their hands.

The companion of the knight was as evidently a Saxon, as the knight was unequivocally a Norman. His square short features, contrasting the oval visage and aquiline profile of his close-shaven comrade, were half concealed beneath a bushy beard and immense moustache. His tunic, also, was of hide, and, tightened at the waist, fell loose to his knee; while a kind of cloak, fastened to the right shoulder by a large round button or brooch, flowed behind and in front, but left both arms free. His cap differed in shape from the Norman's, being round and full at the sides, somewhat in shape like a turban. His bare, brawny throat was curiously punctured with sundry devices, and a verse from the Psalms.

[1] Bayeux Tapestry.

His countenance, though without the high and haughty brow, and the acute, observant eye of his comrade, had a pride and intelligence of its own—a pride somewhat sullen, and an intelligence somewhat slow.

"My good friend, Sexwolf," quoth the Norman in very tolerable Saxon, "I pray you not so to misesteem us. After all, we Normans are of your own race: our fathers spoke the same language as yours."

"That may be," said the Saxon, bluntly, "and so did the Danes, with little difference, when they burned our houses and cut our throats."

"Old tales, those," replied the knight, "and I thank thee for the comparison; for the Danes, thou seest, are now settled amongst ye, peaceful subjects and quiet men, and in a few generations it will be hard to guess who comes from Saxon, who from Dane."

"We waste time, talking such matters," returned the Saxon, feeling himself instinctively no match in argument for his lettered companion; and seeing, with his native strong sense, that some ulterior object, though he guessed not what, lay hid in the conciliatory language of his companion; "nor do I believe, Master Mallet or Gravel—forgive me if I miss of the right forms to address you—that Norman will ever love Saxon, or Saxon Norman; so let us cut our words short. There stands the convent, at which you would like to rest and refresh yourself."

The Saxon pointed to a low, clumsy building of timber, forlorn and decayed, close by a rank marsh, over which swarmed gnats, and all foul animalcules.

Mallet de Graville, for it was he, shrugged his shoulders, and said, with an air of pity and contempt:

"I would, friend Sexwolf, that thou couldst but see

the houses we build to God and his saints in our Normandy; fabrics of stately stone, on the fairest sites. Our Countess Matilda hath a notable taste for the masonry; and our workmen are the brethren of Lombardy, who know all the mysteries thereof."

"I pray thee, Dan-Norman," cried the Saxon, "not to put such ideas into the soft head of King Edward. We pay enow for the Church, though built but of timber; saints help us indeed, if it were builded of stone!"

The Norman crossed himself, as if he had heard some signal impiety, and then said:

"Thou lovest not Mother Church, worthy Sexwolf?"

"I was brought up," replied the sturdy Saxon, "to work and sweat hard, and I love not the lazy who devour my substance, and say, 'the saints gave it them.' Knowest thou not, Master Mallet, that one-third of all the lands of England is in the hands of the priests?"

"Hem!" said the acute Norman, who, with all his devotion, could stoop to wring worldly advantage from each admission of his comrade; "then in this merrie England of thine thou hast still thy grievances and cause of complaint?"

"Yea indeed, and I trow it," quoth the Saxon, even in that day a grumbler; "but I take it, the main difference between thee and me is, that I can say what mislikes me out like a man; and it would fare ill with thy limbs or thy life if thou wert as frank in the grim land of thy *heretogh*."

"Now, *Notre Dame* stop thy prating," said the Norman, in high disdain, while his brow frowned and his eye sparkled. "Strong judge and great captain as is William the Norman, his barons and knights hold

their heads high in his presence, and not a grievance weighs on the heart that we give not out with the lip."

"So have I heard," said the Saxon, chuckling; "I have heard, indeed, that ye thegns, or great men, are free enow, and plainspoken. But what of the commons—the sixhændmen and the ceorls, master Norman? Dare they speak as we speak of king and of law, of thegn and of captain?"

The Norman wisely curbed the scornful "No, indeed," that rushed to his lips, and said, all sweet and debonnair:

"Each land hath its customs, dear Sexwolf: and if the Norman were king of England, he would take the laws as he finds them, and the ceorls would be as safe with William as Edward."

"The Norman king of England!" cried the Saxon, reddening to the tips of his great ears, "what dost thou babble of, stranger? The Norman!—How could that ever be?"

"Nay, I did but suggest—but suppose such a case," replied the knight, still smothering his wrath. "And why thinkest thou the conceit so outrageous? Thy King is childless; William is his next of kin, and dear to him as a brother; and if Edward did leave him the throne—"

"The throne is for no man to leave," almost roared the Saxon. "Thinkest thou the people of England are like cattle and sheep, and chattels and theowes, to be left by will, as man fancies? The King's wish has its weight, no doubt, but the Witan hath its yea or its nay, and the Witan and Commons are seldom at issue thereon. Thy duke King of England! Marry! Ha! ha!"

"Brute!" muttered the knight to himself; then adding aloud, with his old tone of irony (now much habitually subdued by years and discretion), "Why takest thou so the part of the ceorls? thou a captain, and well-nigh a thegn!"

"I was born a ceorl, and my father before me," returned Sexwolf, "and I feel with my class; though my grandson may rank with the thegns, and, for aught I know, with the earls."

The Sire de Graville involuntarily drew off from the Saxon's side, as if made suddenly aware that he had grossly demeaned himself in such unwitting familiarity with a ceorl, and a ceorl's son; and he said, with a much more careless accent and lofty port than before:

"Good man, thou wert a ceorl, and now thou leadest Earl Harold's men to the war! How is this? I do not quite comprehend it."

"How shouldst thou, poor Norman?" replied the Saxon, compassionately. "The tale is soon told. Know that when Harold our Earl was banished, and his lands taken, we his ceorls helped with his sixhændman, Clapa, to purchase his land, nigh by London, and the house wherein thou didst find me, of a stranger, thy countryman, to whom they were lawlessly given. And we tilled the land, we tended the herds, and we kept the house till the Earl came back."

"Ye had moneys then, moneys of your own, ye ceorls!" said the Norman, avariciously.

"How else could we buy our freedom? Every ceorl hath some hours to himself to employ to his profit, and can lay by for his own ends. These savings we gave up for our Earl, and when the Earl came back, he gave the sixhændman hides of land enow to make him a thegn; and he gave the ceorls who hade

holpen Clapa, their freedom and broad shares of his boc-land, and most of them now hold their own ploughs and feed their own herds. But I loved the Earl (having no wife) better than swine and glebe, and I prayed him to let me serve him in arms. And so I have risen, as with us ceorls can rise."

"I am answered," said Mallet de Graville, thoughtfully, and still somewhat perplexed. "But these theowes, (they are slaves,) never rise. It cannot matter to them whether shaven Norman or bearded Saxon sit on the throne?"

"Thou art right there," answered the Saxon; "it matters as little to them as it doth to thy thieves and felons, for many of them are felons and thieves, or the children of such; and most of those who are not, it is said, are not Saxons, but the barbarous folks whom the Saxons subdued. No, wretched things, and scarce men, they care nought for the land. Howbeit, even they are not without hope, for the Church takes their part; and that, at least, I for one think Church-worthy," added the Saxon with a softened eye. "And every abbot is bound to set free three theowes on his lands, and few who own theowes die without freeing some by their will; so that the sons of theowes may be thegns, and thegns some of them are at this day."

"Marvels!" cried the Norman. "But surely they bear a stain and stigma, and their fellow-thegns flout them?"

"Not a whit—why so? land is land, money money. Little, I trow, care we what a man's father may have been, if the man himself hath his ten hides or more of good boc-land."

"Ye value land and the moneys," said the Norman, "so do we, but we value more name and birth."

"Ye are still in your leading-strings, Norman," replied the Saxon, waxing good-humoured in his contempt. "We have an old saying and a wise one, 'All come from Adam except Tib the ploughman: but when Tib grows rich all call him "dear brother."'"

"With such pestilent notions," quoth the Sire de Graville, no longer keeping temper, "I do not wonder that our fathers of Norway and Daneland beat ye so easily. The love for things ancient—creed, lineage, and name, is better steel against the stranger than your smiths ever welded."

Therewith, and not waiting for Sexwolf's reply, he clapped spurs to his palfrey, and soon entered the courtyard of the convent.

A monk of the order of St. Benedict, then most in favour,[1] ushered the noble visitor into the cell of the abbot; who, after gazing at him a moment in wonder and delight, clasped him to his breast and kissed him heartily on brow and cheek.

"Ah, Guillaume," he exclaimed in the Norman tongue, "this is indeed a grace for which to sing *Jubilate*. Thou canst not guess how welcome is the face of a countryman in this horrible land of ill-cooking and exile."

"Talking of grace, my dear father, and food," said De Graville, loosening the cincture of the tight vest which gave him the shape of a wasp—for even at that early period, small waists were in vogue with the warlike fops of the French Continent—"talking of grace, the sooner thou say'st it over some friendly refection, the more will the Latin sound unctuous and musical. I have journeyed since daybreak, and am now hungered and faint."

[1] Indeed, apparently the only monastic order in England.

"Alack, alack!" cried the abbot, plaintively, "thou knowest little, my son, what hardships we endure in these parts, how larded our larders, and how nefarious our fare. The flesh of swine salted—"

"The flesh of Beelzebub," cried Mallet de Graville, aghast. "But comfort thee, I have stores on my sumpter-mules—*poulardes* and fishes, and other not despicable comestibles, and a few flasks of wine, not pressed, laud the saints! from the vines of this country: wherefore, wilt thou see to it, and instruct thy cooks how to season the cheer?"

"No cooks have I to trust to," replied the abbot; "of cooking know they here as much as of Latin; nathless, I will go and do my best with the stew-pans. Meanwhile, thou wilt at least have rest and the bath. For the Saxons, even in their convents, are a clean race, and learned the bath from the Dane."

"That I have noted," said the knight, "for even at the smallest house at which I lodged in my way from London, the host hath courteously offered me the bath, and the hostess linen curious and fragrant; and to say truth, the poor people are hospitable and kind, despite their uncouth hate of the foreigner; nor is their meat to be despised, plentiful and succulent; but *pardex*, as thou sayest, little helped by the art of dressing. Wherefore, my father, I will while the time till the *poulardes* be roasted, and the fish broiled or stewed, by the ablutions thou profferest me. I shall tarry with thee some hours, for I have much to learn."

The abbot then led the Sire de Graville by the hand to the cell of honour and guestship, and having seen that the bath prepared was of warmth sufficient, for both Norman and Saxon (hardy men as they seem to us from afar) so shuddered at the touch of cold water,

that a bath of natural temperature (as well as a hard bed) was sometimes imposed as a penance,—the good father went his way, to examine the sumpter-mules, and admonish the much suffering and bewildered lay-brother who officiated as cook,—and who, speaking neither Norman nor Latin, scarce made out one word in ten of his superior's elaborate exhortations.

Mallet's squire, with a change of raiment, and goodly coffers of soaps, unguents, and odours, took his way to the knight, for a Norman of birth was accustomed to much personal attendance, and had all respect for the body; and it was nearly an hour before, in long gown of fur, reshaven, dainty, and decked, the Sire de Graville bowed, and sighed, and prayed before the refection set out in the abbot's cell.

The two Normans, despite the sharp appetite of the layman, ate with great gravity and decorum, drawing forth the morsels served to them on spits with silent examination; seldom more than tasting, with looks of patient dissatisfaction, each of the comestibles; sipping rather than drinking, nibbling rather than devouring, washing their fingers in rose water with nice care at the close, and waving them afterwards gracefully in the air, to allow the moisture somewhat to exhale before they wiped off the lingering dews with their napkins. Then they exchanged looks and sighed in concert, as if recalling the polished manners of Normandy, still retained in that desolate exile. And their temperate meal thus concluded, dishes, wines, and attendants vanished, and their talk commenced.

"How camest thou in England?" asked the abbot abruptly.

"Sauf your reverence," answered De Graville, "not wholly for reason different from those that bring thee

hither. When, after the death of that truculent and orgulous Godwin, King Edward entreated Harold to let him have back some of his dear Norman favourites, thou, then little pleased with the plain fare and sharp discipline of the convent of Bec, didst pray Bishop William of London to accompany such train as Harold, moved by his poor king's supplication, was pleased to permit. The bishop consented, and thou wert enabled to change monk's cowl for abbot's mitre. In a word, ambition brought thee to England, and ambition brings me hither."

"Hem! and how? Mayst thou thrive better than I in this swine-sty!"

"You remember," renewed De Graville, "that Lanfranc, the Lombard, was pleased to take interest in my fortunes, then not the most flourishing, and after his return from Rome, with the Pope's dispensation for Count William's marriage with his cousin, he became William's most trusted adviser. Both William and Lanfranc were desirous to set an example of learning to our Latinless nobles, and therefore my scholarship found grace in their eyes. In brief—since then I have prospered and thriven. I have fair lands by the Seine, free from clutch of merchant and Jew. I have founded a convent, and slain some hundreds of Breton marauders. Need I say that I am in high favour? Now it so chanced that a cousin of mine, Hugo de Magnaville, a brave lance and franc-rider, chanced to murder his brother in a little domestic affray, and, being of conscience tender and nice, the deed preyed on him, and he gave his lands to Odo of Bayeux, and set off to Jerusalem. There, having prayed at the tomb," (the knight crossed himself,) "he felt at once miraculously cheered and relieved; but, journeying back, mishaps

befell him. He was made slave by some infidel, to one of whose wives he sought to be gallant, *par amours*, and only escaped at last by setting fire to paynim and prison. Now, by the aid of the Virgin, he has got back to Rouen, and holds his own land again in fief from proud Odo, as a knight of the bishop's. It so happened that, passing homeward through Lycia, before these misfortunes befell him, he made friends with a fellow-pilgrim who had just returned, like himself, from the Sepulchre, but not lightened, like him, of the load of his crime. This poor palmer lay broken-hearted and dying in the hut of an eremite, where my cousin took shelter; and, learning that Hugo was on his way to Normandy, he made himself known as Sweyn, the once fair and proud Earl of England, eldest son to old Godwin, and father to Haco, whom our Count still holds as a hostage. He besought Hugo to intercede with the Count for Haco's release and return, if King Edward assented thereto; and charged my cousin, moreover, with a letter to Harold, his brother, which Hugo undertook to send over. By good luck, it so chanced that, through all his sore trials, cousin Hugo kept safe round his neck a leaden effigy of the Virgin. The infidels disdained to rob him of lead, little dreaming the worth which the sanctity gave to the metal. To the back of the image Hugo fastened the letter, and so, though somewhat tattered and damaged, he had it still with him on arriving in Rouen.

"Knowing, then, my grace with the Count, and not, despite absolution and pilgrimage, much wishing to trust himself in the presence of William, who thinks gravely of fratricide, he prayed me to deliver the message, and ask leave to send to England the letter."

"It is a long tale," quoth the abbot.

"Patience, my father! I am nearly at the end. Nothing more in season could chance for my fortunes. Know that William has been long moody and anxious as to matters in England. The secret accounts he receives from the Bishop of London make him see that Edward's heart is much alienated from him, especially since the Count has had daughters and sons; for, as thou knowest, William and Edward both took vows of chastity in youth,[1] and William got absolved from his, while Edward hath kept firm to the plight. Not long ere my cousin came back, William had heard that Edward had acknowledged his kinsman as natural heir to his throne. Grieved and troubled at this, William had said in my hearing, 'Would that amidst yon statues of steel, there were some cool head and wise tongue I could trust with my interests in England! and would that I could devise fitting plea and excuse for an envoy to Harold the Earl!' Much had I mused over these words, and a light-hearted man was Mallet de Graville when, with Sweyn's letter in hand, he went to Lanfranc the abbot and said, 'Patron and father! thou knowest that I, almost alone of the Norman knights, have studied the Saxon language. And if the Duke wants messenger and plea, here stands the messenger, and in his hand is the plea.' Then I told my tale. Lanfranc went at once to Duke William. By this time, news of the Atheling's death had arrived, and things looked more bright to my liege. Duke William was pleased to summon me straightway, and give me his instructions. So over the sea I came alone, save a single squire, reached London, learned the King and his court were at Winchester (but with

[1] See Note to Robert of Gloucester, vol. ii. p. 372.

them I had little to do), and that Harold the Earl was at the head of his forces in Wales against Gryffyth the Lion King. The Earl had sent in haste for a picked and chosen band of his own retainers, on his demesnes near the city. These I joined, and learning thy name at the monastery at Gloucester, I stopped here to tell thee my news and hear thine."

"Dear brother," said the abbot, looking enviously on the knight, "would that, like thee, instead of entering the Church, I had taken up arms! Alike once was our lot, well born and penniless. Ah me!—Thou art now as the swan on the river, and I as the shell on the rock."

"But," quoth the knight, "though the canons, it is true, forbid monks to knock people on the head, except in self-preservation, thou knowest well that, even in Normandy, (which, I take it, is the sacred college of all priestly lore, on this side the Alps,) those canons are deemed too rigorous for practice: and, at all events, it is not forbidden thee to look on the pastime with sword or mace by thy side in case of need. Wherefore, remembering thee in times past, I little counted on finding thee—like a slug in thy cell! No; but with mail on thy back, the canons clean forgotten, and helping stout Harold to sliver and brain these turbulent Welchmen."

"Ah me! ah me! No such good fortune!" sighed the tall abbot. "Little, despite thy former sojourn in London, and thy lore of their tongue, knowest thou of these unmannerly Saxons. Rarely indeed do abbot and prelate ride to the battle;[1] and were it not for a

[1] The Saxon priests were strictly forbidden to bear arms.—Spelm. *Concil.* p. 238.

It is mentioned in the English Chronicles, as a very extraor-

huge Danish monk, who took refuge here to escape mutilation for robbery, and who mistakes the Virgin for a Valkyr, and St. Peter for Thor,—were it not, I say, that we now and then have a bout at sword-play together, my arm would be quite out of practice."

"Cheer thee, old friend," said the knight, pityingly, "better times may come yet. Meanwhile, now to affairs. For all I hear strengthens all William has heard, that Harold the Earl is the first man in England. Is it not so?"

"Truly, and without dispute."

"Is he married, or celibate? For that is a question which even his own men seem to answer equivocally."

"Why, all the wandering minstrels have songs, I am told by those who comprehend this poor barbarous tongue, of the beauty of *Editha pulchra,* to whom it is said the Earl is betrothed, or it may be worse. But he is certainly not married, for the dame is akin to him within the degrees of the Church."

"Hem, not married! that is well; and this Algar, or Elgar, he is not now with the Welch, I hear."

"No; sore ill at Chester with wounds and much chafing, for he hath sense to see that his cause is lost. The Norwegian fleet have been scattered over the seas by the Earl's ships, like birds in a storm. The rebel Saxons who joined Gryffyth under Algar have been so beaten, that those who survive have deserted their chief, and Gryffyth himself is penned up in his last defiles, and cannot much longer resist the stout foe, who, by valorous St. Michael, is truly a great cap-

dinary circumstance, that a bishop of Hereford, who had been Harold's chaplain, did actually take sword and shield against the Welch. Unluckily, this valiant prelate was slain so soon, that it was no encouraging example.

tain. As soon as Gryffyth is subdued, Algar will be crushed in his retreat, like a bloated spider in his web; and then England will have rest, unless our liege, as thou hintest, set her to work again."

The Norman knight mused a few moments, before he said:

"I understand, then, that there is no man in the land who is peer to Harold:—not, I suppose, Tostig his brother?"

"Not Tostig, surely, whom nought but Harold's repute keeps a day in his earldom. But of late—for he is brave and skilful in war—he hath done much to command the respect, though he cannot win back the love, of his fierce Northumbrians, for he hath holpen the Earl gallantly in this invasion of Wales, both by sea and by land. But Tostig shines only from his brother's light; and if Gurth were more ambitious, Gurth alone could be Harold's rival."

The Norman, much satisfied with the information thus gleaned from the abbot, who, despite his ignorance of the Saxon tongue, was, like all his countrymen, acute and curious, now rose to depart. The abbot, detaining him a few moments, and looking at him wistfully, said, in a low voice:

"What thinkest thou are Count William's chances of England?"

"Good, if he have recourse to stratagem; sure, if he can win Harold."

"Yet, take my word, the English love not the Normans, and will fight stiffly."

"That I believe. But if fighting must be, I see that it will be the fight of a single battle, for there is neither fortress nor mountain to admit of long warfare. And look you, my friend, everything here is *worn out!*

The royal line is extinct with Edward, save in a child, whom I hear no man name as a successor; the old nobility are gone, there is no reverence for old names; the Church is as decrepit in the spirit as thy lath monastery is decayed in its timbers; the martial spirit of the Saxon is half rotted away in the subjugation to a clergy, not brave and learned, but timid and ignorant; the desire for money eats up all manhood; the people have been accustomed to foreign monarchs under the Danes; and William, once victor, would have but to promise to retain the old laws and liberties, to establish himself as firmly as Canute. The Anglo-Danes might trouble him somewhat, but rebellion would become a weapon in the hands of a schemer like William. He would bristle all the land with castles and forts, and hold it as a camp. My poor friend, we shall live yet to exchange gratulations,—thou prelate of some fair English see, and I baron of broad English lands."

"I think thou art right," said the tall abbot, cheerily, "and marry, when the day comes, I will at least fight for the Duke. Yea—thou art right," he continued, looking round the dilapidated walls of the cell; "all here is worn out, and naught can restore the realm, save the Norman William, or——"

"Or who?"

"Or the Saxon Harold. But thou goest to see him —judge for thyself."

"I will do so, and heedfully," said the Sire de Graville; and embracing his friend he renewed his journey.

CHAPTER VII

Messire Mallet de Graville possessed in perfection that cunning astuteness which characterised the Normans, as it did all the old pirate races of the Baltic; and if, O reader, thou, peradventure, shouldst ever in this remote day have dealings with the tall men of Ebor or Yorkshire, there wilt thou yet find the old Dane-father's wit—it may be to thy cost—more especially if treating for those animals which the ancestors ate, and which the sons, without eating, still manage to fatten on.

But though the crafty knight did his best, during his progress from London into Wales, to extract from Sexwolf all such particulars respecting Harold and his brethren as he had reasons for wishing to learn, he found the stubborn sagacity or caution of the Saxon more than a match for him. Sexwolf had a dog's instinct in all that related to his master; and he felt, though he scarce knew why, that the Norman cloaked some design upon Harold in all the cross-questionings so carelessly ventured. And his stiff silence, or bluff replies, when Harold was mentioned, contrasted much the unreserve of his talk when it turned upon the general topics of the day, or the peculiarities of Saxon manners.

By degrees, therefore, the knight, chafed and foiled, drew into himself; and seeing no farther use could be made of the Saxon, suffered his own national scorn of villein companionship to replace his artificial urbanity. He therefore rode alone, and a little in advance of the rest, noticing with a soldier's eye the characteristics of the country, and marvelling, while he rejoiced,

at the insignificance of the defences which, even on the Marches, guarded the English country from the Cymrian ravager.[1] In musings of no very auspicious and friendly nature towards the land he thus visited, the Norman, on the second day from that in which he had conversed with the abbot, found himself amongst the savage defiles of North Wales.

Pausing there in a narrow pass overhung with wild and desolate rocks, the knight deliberately summoned his squires, clad himself in his ring mail, and mounted his great *destrier*.

"Thou dost wrong, Norman," said Sexwolf, "thou fatiguest thyself in vain—heavy arms here are needless. I have fought in this country before: and as for thy steed, thou wilt soon have to forsake it, and march on foot."

"Know, friend," retorted the knight, "that I come not here to learn the horn-book of war; and for the rest, know also, that a noble of Normandy parts with his life ere he forsakes his good steed."

"Ye outlanders and Frenchmen," said Sexwolf, showing the whole of his teeth through his forest of beard, "love boast and big talk; and, on my troth, thou mayest have thy belly full of them yet; for we are still in the track of Harold, and Harold never leaves behind him a foe. Thou art as safe here, as if singing psalms in a convent."

"For thy jests, let them pass, courteous sir," said the Norman; "but I pray thee only not to call me Frenchman.[2] I impute it to thy ignorance in things comely

[1] See Note (K), at the end of the volume.

[2] The Normans and French detested each other; and it was the Norman who taught to the Saxon his own animosities against the Frank. A very eminent antiquary, indeed, De la Rue, considered that the Bayeux tapestry could not be the

and martial, and not to thy design to insult me. Though my own mother was French, learn that a Norman despises a Frank only less than he doth a Jew."

"Crave your grace," said the Saxon, "but I thought all ye outlanders were the same, rib and rib, sibbe and sibbe."

"Thou wilt know better, one of these days. March on, master Sexwolf."

The pass gradually opened on a wide patch of rugged and herbless waste; and Sexwolf, riding up to the knight, directed his attention to a stone, on which was inscribed the words, "*Hic victor fuit Haroldus*,"—Here Harold conquered.

"In sight of a stone like that, no Walloon dare come," said the Saxon.

"A simple and classical trophy," remarked the Norman, complacently, "and saith much. I am glad to see thy lord knows the Latin."

"I say not that he knows Latin," replied the prudent Saxon; fearing that that could be no wholesome information on his lord's part, which was of a kind to give gladness to the Norman—"Ride on while the road lets ye—in God's name."

On the confines of Caernarvonshire, the troop halted at a small village, round which had been newly dug a deep military-trench, bristling with palisades, and within its confines might be seen,—some reclined on the grass, some at dice, some drinking,—many men,

work of Matilda, or her age, because in it the Normans are called *French*. But that is a gross blunder on his part; for William, in his own charters, calls the Normans "*Franci*." Wace, in his "Roman de Rou," often styles the Normans "French;" and William of Poitiers, a contemporary of the Conqueror, gives them also in one passage the same name. Still, it is true that the Normans were generally very tenacious of their distinction from their gallant but hostile neighbours.

whose garbs of tanned hide, as well as a pennon waving from a little mound in the midst, bearing the tiger heads of Earl Harold's insignia, showed them to be Saxons.

"Here we shall learn," said Sexwolf, "what the Earl is about—and here, at present, ends my journey."

"Are these the Earl's headquarters, then?—no castle, even of wood—no wall, nought but ditch and palisades?" asked Mallet de Graville in a tone between surprise and contempt.

"Norman," said Sexwolf, "the castle is there, though you see it not, and so are the walls. The castle is Harold's name, which no Walloon will dare to confront; and the walls are the heaps of the slain which lie in every valley around." So saying, he wound his horn, which was speedily answered, and led the way over a plank which admitted across the trench.

"Not even a drawbridge!" groaned the knight.

Sexwolf exchanged a few words with one who seemed the head of the small garrison, and then regaining the Norman, said: "The Earl and his men have advanced into the mountainous regions of Snowdon; and there, it is said, the blood-lusting Gryffyth is at length driven to bay. Harold hath left orders that, after as brief a refreshment as may be, I and my men, taking the guide he hath left for us, join him on foot. There may now be danger: for though Gryffyth himself may be pinned to his heights, he may have met some friends in these parts to start up from crag and combe. The way on horse is impassable: wherefore, master Norman, as our quarrel is not thine nor thine our lord, I commend thee to halt here in peace and in safety, with the sick and the prisoners."

"It is a merry companionship, doubtless," said the Norman; "but one travels to learn, and I would fain see somewhat of thine uncivil skirmishings with these men of the mountains; wherefore, as I fear my poor mules are light of the provender, give me to eat and to drink. And then shalt thou see, should we come in sight of the enemy, if a Norman's big words are the sauce of small deeds."

"Well spoken, and better than I reckoned on," said Sexwolf, heartily.

While De Graville, alighting, sauntered about the village, the rest of the troop exchanged greetings with their countrymen. It was, even to the warrior's eye, a mournful scene. Here and there, heaps of ashes and ruin—houses riddled and burned—the small, humble church, untouched indeed by war, but looking desolate and forlorn—with sheep grazing on large recent mounds thrown over the brave dead, who slept in the ancestral spot they had defended.

The air was fragrant with spicy smells of the gale or bog myrtle; and the village lay sequestered in a scene wild indeed and savage, but prodigal of a stern beauty to which the Norman, poet by race, and scholar by culture, was not insensible. Seating himself on a rude stone, apart from all the warlike and murmuring groups, he looked forth on the dim and vast mountain peaks, and the rivulet that rushed below, intersecting the village, and lost amidst copses of mountain ash. From these more refined contemplations he was roused by Sexwolf, who, with greater courtesy than was habitual to him, accompanied the theowes who brought the knight a repast, consisting of cheese, and small pieces of seethed kid, with a large horn of very indifferent mead.

"The Earl puts all his men on Welch diet," said the captain, apologetically. "For indeed, in this lengthy warfare, nought else is to be had!"

The knight curiously inspected the cheese, and bent earnestly over the kid.

"It sufficeth, good Sexwolf," said he, suppressing a natural sigh. "But instead of this honey-drink, which is more fit for bees than for men, get me a draught of fresh water: water is your only safe drink before fighting."

"Thou hast never drank ale, then!" said the Saxon; "but thy foreign tastes shall be heeded, strange man."

A little after noon, the horns were sounded, and the troop prepared to depart. But the Norman observed that they had left behind all their horses: and his squire, approaching, informed him that Sexwolf had positively forbidden the knight's steed to be brought forth.

"Was it ever heard before," cried Sire Mallet de Graville, "that a Norman knight was expected to walk, and to walk against a foe too! Call hither the villein,—that is, the captain."

But Sexwolf himself here appeared, and to him De Graville addressed his indignant remonstrance. The Saxon stood firm, and to each argument replied simply, "It is the Earl's orders;" and finally wound up with a bluff—"Go or let alone: stay here with thy horse, or march with us on thy feet."

"My horse is a gentleman," answered the knight, "and, as such, would be my more fitting companion. But as it is, I yield to compulsion—I bid thee solemnly observe, by compulsion; so that it may never be said of William Mallet de Graville, that he walked, *bon gré*, to battle." With that, he loosened his sword

in the sheath, and, still retaining his ring mail, fitting close as a shirt, strode on with the rest.

A Welch guide, subject to one of the Underkings (who was in allegiance to England, and animated, as many of those petty chiefs were, with a vindictive jealousy against the rival tribe of Gryffyth, far more intense than his dislike of the Saxon), led the way.

The road wound for some time along the course of the river Conway; Penmaen-mawr loomed before them. Not a human being came in sight, not a goat was seen on the distant ridges, not a sheep on the pastures. The solitude in the glare of the broad August sun was oppressive. Some houses they passed —if buildings of rough stones, containing but a single room, can be called houses—but they were deserted. Desolation preceded their way, for they were on the track of Harold the Victor. At length, they passed the cold Conovium, now Caer-hên, lying low near the river. There were still (not as we now scarcely discern them, after centuries of havoc,) the mighty ruins of the Romans,—vast shattered walls, a tower half demolished, visible remnants of gigantic baths, and, proudly rising near the present ferry of Tal-y-Cafn, the fortress, almost unmutilated, of Castell-y-Bryn. On the castle waved the pennon of Harold. Many large flat-bottomed boats were moored to the river-side, and the whole place bristled with spears and javelins.

Much comforted, (for,—though he disdained to murmur, and rather than forego his mail, would have died therein a martyr,—Mallet de Graville was mightily wearied by the weight of his steel,) and hoping now to see Harold himself, the knight sprang forward with a spasmodic effort at liveliness, and found himself in the

midst of a group, among whom he recognised at a glance his old acquaintance, Godrith. Doffing his helm with its long nose-piece, he caught the thegn's hand, and exclaimed:

"Well met, *ventre de Guillaume!* well met, O Godree the debonnair! Thou rememberest Mallet de Graville, and in this unseemly guise, on foot, and with villeins, sweating under the eyes of plebeian Phœbus, thou beholdest that much-suffering man!"

"Welcome indeed," returned Godrith, with some embarrassment; "but how camest thou hither, and whom seekest thou?"

"Harold, thy Count, man—and I trust he is here."

"Not so, but not far distant—at a place by the mouth of the river called Caer Gyffin.[1] Thou shalt take boat, and be there ere the sunset."

"Is a battle at hand? Yon churl disappointed and tricked me; he promised me danger, and not a soul have we met."

"Harold's besom sweeps clean," answered Godrith, smiling. "But thou art like, perhaps, to be in at the death. We have driven this Welch lion to bay at last. He is ours, or grim Famine's. Look yonder;" and Godrith pointed to the heights of Penmaen-mawr. "Even at this distance, you may yet descry something grey and dim against the sky."

"Deemest thou my eye so ill practised in siege, as not to see towers? Tall and massive they are, though they seem here as airy as masts, and as dwarfish as landmarks."

"On that hill-top, and in those towers, is Gryffyth, the Welch king, with the last of his force. He cannot escape us; our ships guard all the coasts of the

[1] The present town and castle of Conway.

shore; our troops, as here, surround every pass. Spies, night and day, keep watch. The Welch moels (or beacon-rocks) are manned by our warders. And, were the Welch King to descend, signals would blaze from post to post, and gird him with fire and sword. From land to land, from hill to hill, from Hereford to Caerleon, from Caerleon to Milford, from Milford to Snowdon, through Snowdon to yonder fort, built, they say, by the fiends or the giants,—through defile and through forest, over rock, through morass, we have pressed on his heels. Battle and foray alike have drawn the blood from his heart; and thou wilt have seen the drops yet red on the way, where the stone tells that Harold was victor."

"A brave man and true king, then, this Gryffyth," said the Norman, with some admiration; "but," he added in a colder tone, "I confess, for my own part, that though I pity the valiant man beaten, I honour the brave man who wins; and though I have seen but little of this rough land as yet, I can well judge from what I have seen, that no captain, not of patience unwearied, and skill most consummate, could conquer a bold enemy in a country where every rock is a fort."

"So I fear," answered Godrith, "that thy countryman Rolf found; for the Welch beat him sadly, and the reason was plain. He insisted on using horses where no horses could climb, and attiring men in full armour to fight against men light and nimble as swallows, that skim the earth, then are lost in clouds. Harold, more wise, turned our Saxons into Welchmen, flying as they flew, climbing where they climbed; it has been as a war of the birds. And now there rests but the eagle, in his last lonely eyrie."

"Thy battles have improved thy eloquence much,

Messire Godree," said the Norman, condescendingly. "Nevertheless, I cannot but think a few light horse——"

"Could scale yon mountain-brow?" said Godrith, laughing, and pointing to Penmaen-mawr.

The Norman looked and was silent, though he thought to himself, "That Sexwolf was no such dolt after all!"

BOOK VII

THE WELCH KING

CHAPTER I

The sun had just cast his last beams over the breadth of water into which Conway, or rather Cyn-wy, "the great river," emerges its winding waves. Not at that time existed the matchless castle, which is now the monument of Edward Plantagenet, and the boast of Wales. But besides all the beauty the spot took from nature, it had even some claim from ancient art. A rude fortress rose above the stream of Gyffin, out of the wrecks of some greater Roman hold,[1] and vast ruins of a former town lay round it; while opposite the fort, on the huge and ragged promontory of Gogarth, might still be seen, forlorn and grey, the wrecks of the imperial city, destroyed ages before by lightning.

All these remains of a power and a pomp that Rome in vain had bequeathed to the Briton, were full of pathetic and solemn interest, when blent with the thought, that on yonder steep, the brave prince of a race of heroes, whose line transcended, by ages, all the other royalties of the North, awaited, amidst the ruins of man, and in the stronghold which nature yet gave, the hour of his doom.

But these were not the sentiments of the martial and observant Norman, with the fresh blood of a new race of conquerors.

[1] See CAMDEN'S *Britannia, "Caernarvonshire."*

"In this land," thought he, "far more even than in that of the Saxon, there are the ruins of old; and when the present can neither maintain nor repair the past, its future is subjection or despair."

Agreeably to the peculiar uses of Saxon military skill, which seems to have placed all strength in dykes and ditches, as being perhaps the cheapest and readiest outworks, a new trench had been made round the fort, on two sides, connecting it on the third and fourth with the streams of Gyffin and the Conway. But the boat was rowed up to the very walls, and the Norman, springing to land, was soon ushered into the presence of the Earl.

Harold was seated before a rude table, and bending over a rough map of the great mountain of Penmaen; a lamp of iron stood beside the map, though the air was yet clear.

The Earl rose, as De Graville, entering with the proud but easy grace habitual to his countrymen, said, in his best Saxon:

"Hail to Earl Harold! William Mallet de Graville, the Norman, greets him, and brings him news from beyond the seas."

There was only one seat in that bare room—the seat from which the Earl had risen. He placed it with simple courtesy before his visitor, and leaning, himself, against the table, said, in the Norman tongue, which he spoke fluently:

"It is no slight thanks that I owe to the Sire de Graville, that he hath undertaken voyage and journey on my behalf; but before you impart your news, I pray you to take rest and food."

"Rest will not be unwelcome; and food, if unrestricted to goats' cheese, and kid-flesh,—luxuries new

to my palate,—will not be untempting; but neither food nor rest can I take, noble Harold, before I excuse myself, as a foreigner, for thus somewhat infringing your laws by which we are banished, and acknowledging gratefully the courteous behaviour I have met from thy countrymen notwithstanding."

"Fair Sir," answered Harold, "pardon us if, jealous of our laws, we have seemed inhospitable to those who would meddle with them. But the Saxon is never more pleased than when the foreigner visits him only as the friend: to the many who settle amongst us for commerce—Fleming, Lombard, German, and Saracen —we proffer shelter and welcome; to the few who, like thee, Sir Norman, venture over the seas but to serve us, we give frank cheer and free hand."

Agreeably surprised at this gracious reception from the son of Godwin, the Norman pressed the hand extended to him, and then drew forth a small case, and related accurately, and with feeling, the meeting of his cousin with Sweyn, and Sweyn's dying charge.

The Earl listened, with eyes bent on the ground, and face turned from the lamp; and, when Mallet had concluded his recital, Harold said, with an emotion he struggled in vain to repress:

"I thank you cordially, gentle Norman, for kindness kindly rendered! I—I—" The voice faltered. "Sweyn was very dear to me in his sorrows! We heard that he had died in Lycia, and grieved much and long. So, after he had thus spoken to your cousin, he—he—— Alas! O Sweyn, my brother!"

"He died," said the Norman, soothingly; "but shriven and absolved; and my cousin says, calm and hopeful, as they die ever who have knelt at the Saviour's tomb!"

Harold bowed his head, and turned the case that held the letter again and again in his hand, but would not venture to open it. The knight himself, touched by a grief so simple and manly, rose with the delicate instinct that belongs to sympathy, and retired to the door, without which yet waited the officer who had conducted him.

Harold did not attempt to detain him, but followed him across the threshold, and briefly commanding the officer to attend to his guest as to himself, said: "With the morning, Sire de Graville, we shall meet again; I see that you are one to whom I need not excuse man's natural emotions."

"A noble presence!" muttered the knight, as he descended the stairs; "but he hath Norman, at least Norse, blood in his veins on the distaff side.—Fair Sir!"—(this aloud to the officer)—"any meat save the kid-flesh, I pray thee; and any drink save the mead!"

"Fear not, guest," said the officer; "for Tostig the Earl hath two ships in yon bay, and hath sent us supplies that would please Bishop William of London; for Tostig the Earl is a toothsome man."

"Commend me, then, to Tostig the Earl," said the knight; "he is an earl after my own heart."

CHAPTER II

On re-entering the room, Harold drew the large bolt across the door, opened the case, and took forth the distained and tattered scroll:

"When this comes to thee, Harold, the brother of thy childish days will sleep in the flesh, and be lost to men's judgment and earth's woe in the spirit. I

have knelt at the Tomb; but no dove hath come forth from the cloud,—no stream of grace hath re-baptised the child of wrath! They tell me now—monk and priest tell me—that I have atoned all my sins; that the dread weregeld is paid; that I may enter the world of men with a spirit free from the load, and a name redeemed from the stain. Think so, O brother!—Bid my father (if he still lives, the dear old man!) think so;—tell Githa to think it; and oh, teach Haco, my son, to hold the belief as a truth! Harold, again I commend to thee my son; be to him as a father! My death surely releases him as a hostage. Let him not grow up in the court of the stranger, in the land of our foes. Let his feet, in his youth, climb the green holts of England;—let his eyes, ere sin dims them, drink the blue of her skies! When this shall reach thee, thou in thy calm, effortless strength, wilt be more great than Godwin our father. Power came to him with travail and through toil, the geld of craft and of force. Power is born to thee as strength to the strong man; it gathers around thee as thou movest; it is not thine aim, it is thy nature, to be great. Shield my child with thy might; lead him forth from the prison-house by thy serene right hand! I ask not for lordships and earldoms, as the appanage of his father; train him not to be rival to thee:—I ask but for freedom, and English air! So counting on thee, O Harold, I turn my face to the wall, and hush my wild heart to peace!"

The scroll dropped noiseless from Harold's hand.

"Thus," said he, mournfully, "hath passed away less a life than a dream! Yet of Sweyn, in our childhood, was Godwin most proud; who so lovely in peace, and so terrible in wrath? My mother taught him the songs of the Baltic, and Hilda led his steps through

the woodland with tales of hero and scald. Alone of our House, he had the gift of the Dane in the flow of fierce song, and for him things lifeless had being. Stately tree, from which all the birds of heaven sent their carol; where the falcon took roost, whence the mavis flew forth in its glee,—how art thou blasted and seared, bough and core!—smit by the lightning and consumed by the worm!"

He paused, and, though none were by, he long shaded his brow with his hand.

"Now," thought he, as he rose and slowly paced the chamber, "now to what lives yet on earth—his son! Often hath my mother urged me in behalf of these hostages; and often have I sent to reclaim them. Smooth and false pretexts have met my own demand, and even the remonstrance of Edward himself. But, surely, now that William hath permitted this Norman to bring over the letter, he will assent to what it hath become a wrong and an insult to refuse; and Haco will return to his father's land, and Wolnoth to his mother's arms."

CHAPTER III

Messire Mallet de Graville (as becomes a man bred up to arms, and snatching sleep with quick grasp whenever that blessing be his to command) no sooner laid his head on the pallet to which he had been consigned, than his eyes closed, and his senses were deaf even to dreams. But at the dead of the midnight he was wakened by sounds that might have roused the Seven Sleepers—shouts, cries, and yells, the blast of horns, the tramp of feet, and the more distant roar of hurrying multitudes. He leaped from his bed, and the

whole chamber was filled with a lurid blood-red air. His first thought was that the fort was on fire. But springing upon the settle along the wall, and looking through the loophole of the tower, it seemed as if not the fort but the whole land was one flame, and through the glowing atmosphere he beheld all the ground, near and far, swarming with men. Hundreds were swimming the rivulet, clambering up dyke mounds, rushing on the levelled spears of the defenders, breaking through line and palisade, pouring into the enclosures; some in half-armour of helm and corselet—others in linen tunics—many almost naked. Loud sharp shrieks of "Alleluia!"[1] blended with those of "Out! out! Holy crosse!"[2] He divined at once that the Welch were storming the Saxon hold. Short time indeed sufficed for that active knight to case himself in his mail; and, sword in hand, he burst through the door, cleared the stairs, and gained the hall below, which was filled with men arming in haste.

"Where is Harold?" he exclaimed.

"On the trenches already," answered Sexwolf, buckling his corselet of hide. "This Welch hell hath broke loose."

"And yon are their beacon-fires? Then the whole land is upon us!"

[1] When (A.D. 220) the bishops, Germanicus, and Lupus, headed the Britons against the Picts and Saxons, in Easter week, fresh from their baptism in the Alyn, Germanicus ordered them to attend to his war-cry, and repeat it; he gave "Alleluia." The hills so loudly re-echoed the cry, that the enemy caught panic, and fled with great slaughter. Maes Garmon, in Flintshire, was the scene of the victory.

[2] The cry of the English at the onset of battle was "Holy Crosse, God Almighty;" afterwards in fight, "Ouct, ouct," out, out.—HEARNE'S *Disc. Antiquity of Motts.*

The latter cry, probably, originated in the habit of defending their standard and central posts with barricades and closed shields; and thus, idiomatically and vulgarly, signified "get out."

"Prate less," quoth Sexwolf; "those are the hills now held by the warders of Harold: our spies gave them notice, and the watch-fires prepared us ere the fiends came in sight, otherwise we had been lying here limbless or headless. Now, men, draw up, and march forth."

"Hold! hold!" cried the pious knight, crossing himself, "is there no priest here to bless us? first a prayer and a psalm!"

"Prayer and psalm!" cried Sexwolf, astonished, "an thou hadst said ale and mead, I could have understood thee.—Out! Out!—Holyrood, Holyrood!"

"The godless paynims!" muttered the Norman, borne away with the crowd.

Once in the open space, the scene was terrific. Brief as had been the onslaught the carnage was already unspeakable. By dint of sheer physical numbers, animated by a valour that seemed as the frenzy of madmen or the hunger of wolves, hosts of the Britons had crossed trench and stream, seizing with their hands the points of the spears opposed to them, bounding over the corpses of their countrymen, and with yells of wild joy rushing upon the close serried lines drawn up before the fort. The stream seemed literally to run gore; pierced by javelins and arrows, corpses floated and vanished, while numbers, undeterred by the havoc, leaped into the waves from the opposite banks. Like bears that surround the ship of a sea-king beneath the polar meteors, or the midnight sun of the north, came the savage warriors through that glaring atmosphere.

Amidst all, two forms were pre-eminent: the one, tall and towering, stood by the trench, and behind a banner, that now drooped round the stave, now

streamed wide and broad, stirred by the rush of men —for the night in itself was breezeless. With a vast Danish axe wielded by both hands, stood this man, confronting hundreds, and at each stroke, rapid as the levin, fell a foe. All round him was a wall of his own —the dead. But in the centre of the space, leading on a fresh troop of shouting Welchmen who had forced their way from another part, was a form which seemed charmed against arrow and spear. For the defensive arms of this chief were as slight as if worn but for ornament: a small corselet of gold covered only the centre of his breast, a gold collar of twisted wires circled his throat, and a gold bracelet adorned his bare arm, dropping gore, not his own, from the wrist to the elbow. He was small and slight-shaped—below the common standard of men—but he seemed as one made a giant by the sublime inspiration of war. He wore no helmet, merely a golden circlet; and his hair, of deep red (longer than was usual with the Welch), hung like the mane of a lion over his shoulders, tossing loose with each stride. His eyes glared like the tiger's at night, and he leaped on the spears with a bound. Lost a moment amidst hostile ranks, save by the swift glitter of his short sword, he made, amidst all, a path for himself and his followers, and emerged from the heart of the steel unscathed and loud-breathing; while, round the line he had broken, wheeled and closed his wild men, striking, rushing, slaying, slain.

"*Pardex*, this is war worth the sharing," said the knight. "And now, worthy Sexwolf, thou shalt see if the Norman is the vaunter thou deemest him. *Dieu nous aide! Notre Dame!*—Take the foe in the rear." But turning round, he perceived that Sexwolf had already led his men towards the standard, which

showed them where stood the Earl, almost alone in his peril. The knight, thus left to himself, did not hesitate:—a minute more, and he was in the midst of the Welch force, headed by the chief with the golden panoply. Secure in his ring mail against the light weapons of the Welch, the sweep of the Norman sword was as the scythe of Death. Right and left he smote through the throng which he took in the flank, and had almost gained the small phalanx of Saxons, that lay firm in the midst, when the Cymrian Chief's flashing eye was drawn to his new and strange foe, by the roar and the groan round the Norman's way; and with the half-naked breast against the shirt of mail, and the short Roman sword against the long Norman falchion, the Lion King of Wales fronted the knight.

Unequal as seems the encounter, so quick was the spring of the Briton, so pliant his arm, and so rapid his weapon, that that good knight (who rather from skill and valour than brute physical strength, ranked amongst the prowest of William's band of martial brothers) would willingly have preferred to see before him Fitzosborne or Montgommeri, all clad in steel and armed with mace and lance, than parried those dazzling strokes, and fronted the angry majesty of that helmless brow. Already the strong rings of his mail had been twice pierced, and his blood trickled fast, while his great sword had but smitten the air in its sweeps at the foe; when the Saxon phalanx, taking advantage of the breach in the ring that girt them, caused by this diversion, and recognising with fierce ire the gold torque and breastplate of the Welch King, made their desperate charge. Then for some minutes the *pêle mêle* was confused and indistinct—blows blind and at random—death coming no man knew whence

or how; till discipline and steadfast order (which the Saxons kept, as by mechanism, through the discord) obstinately prevailed. The wedge forced its way; and, though reduced in numbers and sore wounded, the Saxon troop cleared the ring, and joined the main force drawn up by the fort, and guarded in the rear by its wall.

Meanwhile Harold, supported by the band under Sexwolf, had succeeded at length in repelling farther reinforcements of the Welch at the more accessible part of the trenches; and casting now his practised eye over the field, he issued orders for some of the men to regain the fort, and open from the battlements, and from every loophole, the batteries of stone and javelin, which then (with the Saxons, unskilled in sieges,) formed the main artillery of forts. These orders given, he planted Sexwolf and most of his band to keep watch round the trenches; and shading his eye with his hand, and looking towards the moon, all waning and dimmed in the watchfires, he said, calmly, "Now patience fights for us. Ere the moon reaches yon hill-top, the troops of Aber and Caer-hên will be on the slopes of Penmaen, and cut off the retreat of the Walloons. Advance my flag to the thick of yon strife."

But as the Earl, with his axe swung over his shoulder, and followed but by some half-score or more with his banner, strode on where the wild war was now mainly concentrated, just midway between trench and fort, Gryffyth caught sight both of the banner and the Earl, and left the press at the very moment when he had gained the greatest advantage; and when, indeed, but for the Norman, who, wounded as he was, and unused to fight on foot, stood resolute in the van, the

Saxons, wearied out by numbers, and falling fast beneath the javelins, would have fled into their walls, and so sealed their fate,—for the Welch would have entered at their heels.

But it was the misfortune of the Welch heroes never to learn that war is a science; and instead of now centring all force on the point most weakened, the whole field vanished from the fierce eye of the Welch King, when he saw the banner and form of Harold.

The Earl beheld the coming foe, wheeling round, as the hawk on the heron;—halted, drew up his few men in a semicircle, with their large shields as a rampart, and their levelled spears as a palisade; and before them all, as a tower, stood Harold with his axe. In a minute more he was surrounded; and through the rain of javelins that poured upon him, hissed and glittered the sword of Gryffyth. But Harold, more practised than the Sire de Graville in the sword-play of the Welch, and unencumbered by other defensive armour (save only the helm, which was shaped like the Norman's,) than his light coat of hide, opposed quickness to quickness, and suddenly dropping his axe, sprang upon his foe, and clasping him round with his left arm, with the right hand griped at his throat:

"Yield and quarter!—yield, for thy life, son of Llewellyn!"

Strong was that embrace, and deathlike that gripe; yet, as the snake from the hand of the dervise—as a ghost from the grasp of the dreamer, the lithe Cymrian glided away, and the broken torque was all that remained in the clutch of Harold.

At this moment a mighty yell of despair broke from the Welch near the fort: stones and javelins rained upon them from the walls, and the fierce Norman was

in the midst, with his sword drinking blood; but not for javelin, stone, and sword, shrank and shouted the Welchmen. On the other side of the trenches were marching against them their own countrymen, the rival tribes that helped the stranger to rend the land: and far to the right were seen the spears of the Saxon from Aber, and to the left was heard the shout of the forces under Godrith from Caer-hên; and they who had sought the leopard in his lair were now themselves the prey caught in the toils. With new heart, as they beheld these reinforcements, the Saxons pressed on; tumult, and flight, and indiscriminate slaughter, wrapped the field. The Welch rushed to the stream and the trenches; and in the bustle and hurlabaloo, Gryffyth was swept along, as a bull by a torrent; still facing the foe, now chiding, now smiting his own men, now rushing alone on the pursuers, and halting their onslaught, he gained, still unwounded, the stream, paused a moment, laughed loud, and sprang into the wave. A hundred javelins hissed into the sullen and bloody waters. "Hold!" cried Harold the Earl, lifting his hand on high, "No dastard dart at the brave!"

CHAPTER IV

The fugitive Britons, scarce one-tenth of the number that had first rushed to the attack,—performed their flight with the same Parthian rapidity that characterised the assault; and escaping both Welch foe and Saxon, though the former broke ground to pursue them, they gained the steeps of Penmaen.

There was no further thought of slumber that night within the walls. While the wounded were tended,

and the dead were cleared from the soil, Harold, with three of his chiefs, and Mallet de Graville, whose feats rendered it more than ungracious to refuse his request that he might assist in the council, conferred upon the means of terminating the war with the next day. Two of the thegns, their blood hot with strife and revenge, proposed to scale the mountain with the whole force the reinforcements had brought them, and put all they found to the sword.

The third, old and prudent, and inured to Welch warfare, thought otherwise.

"None of us," said he, "know what is the true strength of the place which ye propose to storm. Not even one Welchman have we found who hath ever himself gained the summit, or examined the castle which is said to exist there."[1]

"Said!" echoed De Graville, who, relieved of his mail, and with his wounds bandaged, reclined on his furs on the floor. "Said, noble sir! Cannot our eyes perceive the towers?"

The old thegn shook his head. "At a distance, and through mists, stones loom large, and crags themselves take strange shapes. It may be castle, may be rock, may be old roofless temples of heathenesse that we see. But to repeat (and, as I am slow, I pray not again to be put out in my speech)—none of us know what, there, exists of defence, man-made or Nature-built. Not even thy Welch spies, son of Godwin, have gained to the heights. In the midst lie the scouts of the Welch King, and those on the top can see the bird fly, the goat climb. Few of thy spies, indeed,

[1] Certain high places in Wales, of which this might well be one, were so sacred, that even the dwellers in the immediate neighbourhood never presumed to approach them.

have ever returned with life; their heads have been left at the foot of the hill, with the scroll in their lips,—*'Dic ad inferos—quid in superis novisti.'* Tell to the shades below what thou hast seen in the heights above."

"And the Walloons know Latin!" muttered the knight; "I respect them!"

The slow thegn frowned, stammered, and renewed: "One thing at least is clear; that the rock is well nigh insurmountable to those who know not the passes; that strict watch, baffling even Welch spies, is kept night and day; that the men on the summit are desperate and fierce; that our own troops are awed and terrified by the belief of the Welch, that the spot is haunted and the towers fiend-founded. One single defeat may lose us two years of victory. Gryffyth may break from the eyrie, regain what he hath lost, win back our Welch allies, ever faithless and hollow. Wherefore, I say, go on as we have begun. Beset all the country round; cut off all supplies, and let the foe rot by famine—or waste, as he hath done this night, his strength by vain onslaught and sally."

"Thy counsel is good," said Harold, "but there is yet something to add to it, which may shorten the strife, and gain the end with less sacrifice of life. The defeat of to-night will have humbled the spirits of the Welch; take them yet in the hour of despair and disaster. I wish, therefore, to send to their outposts a nuncius, with these terms: 'Life and pardon to all who lay down arms and surrender.'"

"What, after such havoc and gore?" cried one of the thegns.

"They defend their own soil," replied the Earl simply: "had not we done the same?"

"But the rebel Gryffyth?" asked the old thegn, "thou canst not accept *him* again as crowned sub-king of Edward?"

"No," said the Earl, "I propose to exempt Gryffyth alone from the pardon, with promise, nathless, of life if he give himself up as prisoner; and count, without further condition, on the King's mercy." There was a prolonged silence. None spoke against the Earl's proposal, though the two younger thegns misliked it much.

At last said the elder, "But hast thou thought who will carry this message? Fierce and wild are yon blood-dogs; and man must needs shrive soul and make will, if he will go to their kennel."

"I feel sure that my bode will be safe," answered Harold: "for Gryffyth has all the pride of a king, and, sparing neither man nor child in the onslaught, will respect what the Roman taught his sires to respect—envoy from chief to chief—as a head scatheless and sacred."

"Choose whom thou wilt, Harold," said one of the young thegns, laughing, "but spare thy friends; and whomsoever thou choosest, pay his widow the were-geld."

"Fair sirs," then said De Graville, "if ye think that I, though a stranger, could serve you as nuncius, it would be a pleasure to me to undertake this mission. First, because, being curious as concerns forts and castles, I would fain see if mine eyes have deceived me in taking yon towers for a hold of great might. Secondly, because that same wild-cat of a king must have a court rare to visit. And the only reflection that withholds my pressing the offer as a personal suit is, that though I have some words of the Breton jargon

at my tongue's need, I cannot pretend to be a Tully in Welch; howbeit, since it seems that one, at least, among them knows something of Latin, I doubt not but what I shall get out my meaning!"

"Nay, as to that, Sire de Graville," said Harold, who seemed well pleased with the knight's offer, "there shall be no hindrance or let, as I will make clear to you; and in spite of what you have just heard, Gryffyth shall harm you not in limb or in life. But, kindly and courteous Sir, will your wounds permit the journey, not long, but steep and laborious, and only to be made on foot?"

"On foot!" said the knight, a little staggered, "*Pardex!* well and truly, I did not count upon that!"

"Enough;" said Harold, turning away in evident disappointment, "think of it no more."

"Nay, by your leave, what I have once said I stand to," returned the knight; "albeit, you may as well cleave in two one of those respectable centaurs of which we have read in our youth, as part Norman and horse. I will forthwith go to my chamber, and apparel myself becomingly—not forgetting, in case of the worst, to wear my mail under my robe. Vouchsafe me but an armourer, just to rivet up the rings through which scratched so felinely the paw of that well-appelled *Griffin*."

"I accept your offer frankly," said Harold, "and all shall be prepared for you, as soon as you yourself will re-seek me here."

The knight rose, and though somewhat stiff and smarting with his wounds, left the room lightly, summoned his armourer and squire, and having dressed with all the care and pomp habitual to a Norman, his gold chain round his neck, and his vest stiff with

broidery, he re-entered the apartment of Harold. The Earl received him alone, and came up to him with a cordial face. "I thank thee more, brave Norman, than I ventured to say before my thegns, for I tell thee frankly, that my intent and aim are to save the life of this brave king; and thou canst well understand that every Saxon amongst us must have his blood warmed by contest, and his eyes blind with national hate. You alone, as a stranger, see the valiant warrior and hunted prince, and as such you can feel for him the noble pity of manly foes."

"That is true," said De Graville, a little surprised, "though we Normans are at least as fierce as you Saxons, when we have once tasted blood; and I own nothing would please me better than to dress that catamaran in mail, put a spear in its claws, and a horse under its legs, and thus fight out my disgrace at being so clawed and mauled by its *griffes*. And though I respect a brave knight in distress, I can scarce extend my compassion to a thing that fights against all rule, martial and kingly."

The Earl smiled gravely. "It is the mode in which his ancestors rushed on the spears of Cæsar. Pardon him."

"I pardon him, at your gracious request," quoth the knight, with a grand air, and waving his hands; "say on."

"You will proceed with a Welch monk—whom, though not of the faction of Gryffyth, all Welchmen respect—to the mouth of a frightful pass, skirting the river; the monk will bear aloft the holy rood in signal of peace. Arrived at that pass, you will doubtless be stopped. The monk here will be spokesman; and ask safe-conduct to Gryffyth to deliver my message; he

will also bear certain tokens, which will no doubt win the way for you."

"Arrived before Gryffyth, the monk will accost him; mark and heed well his gestures, since thou wilt know not the Welch tongue he employs. And when he raises the rood, thou,—in the mean while, having artfully approached close to Gryffyth,—wilt whisper in Saxon, which he well understands, and pressing the ring I now give thee into his hand, 'Obey, by this pledge; thou knowest Harold is true, and thy head is sold by thine own people.' If he asks more thou knowest nought."

"So far, this is as should be from chief to chief," said the Norman, touched, "and thus had Fitzosborne done to his foe. I thank thee for this mission, and the more that thou hast not asked me to note the strength of the bulwark, and number the men that may keep it."

Again Harold smiled. "Praise me not for this, noble Norman—we plain Saxons have not your refinements. If ye are led to the summit, which I think ye will not be, the monk at least will have eyes to see, and tongue to relate. But to thee I confide this much;—I know already, that Gryffyth's strongholds are not his walls and his towers, but the superstition of our men, and the despair of his own. I could win those heights, as I have won heights as cloudcapt, but with fearful loss of my own troops, and the massacre of every foe. Both I would spare, if I may."

"Yet thou hast not shown such value for life, in the solitudes I passed," said the knight bluntly.

Harold turned pale, but said firmly, "Sire de Graville, a stern thing is duty, and resistless is its voice. These Welchmen, unless curbed to their mountains, eat into the strength of England, as the tide gnaws

into a shore. Merciless were they in their ravages on our borders, and ghastly and torturing their fell revenge. But it is one thing to grapple with a foe fierce and strong, and another to smite when his power is gone, fang and talon. And when I see before me the faded king of a great race, and the last band of doomed heroes, too few and too feeble to make head against my arms,—when the land is already my own, and the sword is that of the deathsman, not of the warrior,—verily, Sir Norman, duty releases its iron tool, and man becomes man again."

"I go," said the Norman, inclining his head low as to his own great Duke, and turning to the door; yet there he paused, and looking at the ring which he had placed on his finger, he said, "But one word more, if not indiscreet—your answer may help argument, if argument be needed. What tale lies hid in this token?"

Harold coloured and paused a moment, then answered:

"Simply this. Gryffyth's wife, the lady Aldyth, a Saxon by birth, fell into my hands. We were storming Rhadlan, at the farther end of the isle; she was there. We war not against women; I feared the license of my own soldiers, and I sent the lady to Gryffyth. Aldyth gave me this ring on parting; and I bade her tell Gryffyth that whenever, at the hour of his last peril and sorest need, I sent that ring back to him, he might hold it the pledge of his life."

"Is this lady, think you, in the stronghold with her lord?"

"I am not sure, but I fear yes," answered Harold.

"Yet one word: And if Gryffyth refuse, despite all warning?"

Harold's eyes drooped.

"If so, he dies; but not by the Saxon sword. God and our lady speed you!"

CHAPTER V

On the height called Pen-y-Dinas (or "Head of the City") forming one of the summits of Penmaen-mawr, and in the heart of that supposed fortress which no eye in the Saxon camp had surveyed,[1] reclined Gryffyth, the hunted King. Nor is it marvellous that at that day there should be disputes as to the nature and strength of the supposed bulwark, since, in times the most recent, and among antiquaries the most learned, the greatest discrepancies exist, not only as to theoretical opinion, but plain matter of observation, and simple measurement. The place, however, I need scarcely say, was not as we see it now, with its foundations of gigantic ruin, affording ample space for conjecture; yet, even then, a wreck as of Titans, its date and purpose were lost in remote antiquity.

The central area (in which the Welch King now reclined) formed an oval barrow of loose stones: whether so left from the origin, or the relics of some vanished building, was unknown even to bard and diviner. Round this space were four strong circumvallations of loose stones, with a space about eighty yards between each; the walls themselves generally about eight feet wide, but of various height, as the stones had fallen by time and blast. Along these walls rose numerous and almost countless circular buildings, which might pass for towers, though only a few had been recently and

[1] See Note (L), at the end of the volume.

rudely roofed in. To the whole of this quadruple enclosure there was but one narrow entrance, now left open as if in scorn of assault; and a winding narrow pass down the mountain, with innumerable curves, alone led to the single threshold. Far down the hill, walls again were visible; and the whole surface of the steep soil, more than half way in the descent, was heaped with vast loose stones, as if the bones of a dead city. But beyond the innermost enclosure of the fort (if fort, or sacred enclosure, be the correcter name), rose, thick and frequent, other mementos of the Briton; many cromlechs, already shattered and shapeless; the ruins of stone houses; and high over all, those upraised, mighty amber piles, as at Stonehenge, once reared, if our dim learning be true, in honour to Bel, or Bál-Huan,[1] the idol of the sun. All, in short, showed that the name of the place, "the Head of the City," told its tale; all announced that, there, once the Celt had his home, and the gods of the Druid their worship. And musing amidst these skeletons of the past, lay the doomed son of Pen-Dragon.

Beside him a kind of throne had been raised with stones, and over it was spread a tattered and faded velvet pall. On this throne sat Aldyth the Queen; and about the royal pair was still that mockery of a court which the jealous pride of the Celt king retained amidst all the horrors of carnage and famine. Most of the officers indeed (originally in number twenty-four), whose duties attached them to the king and queen of the Cymry, were already feeding the crow or the worm. But still, with gaunt hawk on his wrist, the penhebogydd (grand falconer) stood at a distance; still, with beard sweeping his breast, and

[1] See Note (M), at the end of the volume.

rod in hand, leant against a projecting shaft of the wall, the noiseless gosdegwr, whose duty it was to command silence in the King's hall; and still the penbard bent over his bruised harp, which once had thrilled, through the fair vaults of Caerleon and Rhaldan, in high praise of God, and the King, and the Hero Dead. In the pomp of gold dish and vessel [1] the board was spread on the stones for the King and Queen; and on the dish was the last fragment of black bread, and in the vessel full and clear, the water from the spring that bubbled up everlastingly through the bones of the dead city.

Beyond this innermost space, round a basin of rock, through which the stream overflowed as from an artificial conduit, lay the wounded and exhausted, crawling, turn by turn, to the lips of the basin, and happy that the thirst of fever saved them from the gnawing desire of food. A wan and spectral figure glided listlessly to and fro amidst those mangled, and parched, and dying groups. This personage, in happier times, filled the office of physician to the court, and was placed twelfth in rank amidst the chiefs of the household. And for cure of the "three deadly wounds,"

[1] The Welch seem to have had a profusion of the precious metals very disproportioned to the scarcity of their coined money. To say nothing of the torques, bracelets, and even breastplates of gold, common with their numerous chiefs, their laws affix to offences penalties which attest the prevalent waste both of gold and silver. Thus, an insult to a sub-king of Aberfraw is atoned by a silver rod as thick as the King's little finger, which is in length to reach from the ground to his mouth when sitting; and a gold cup, with a cover as broad as the King's face, and the thickness of a ploughman's nail, or the shell of a goose's egg. I suspect that it was precisely because the Welch coined little or no money, that the metals they possessed became thus common in domestic use. Gold would have been more rarely seen, even amongst the Peruvians, had they coined it into money.

the cloven skull, or the gaping viscera, or the broken limb (all three classed alike), large should have been his fee.[1] But feeless went he now from man to man, with his red ointment and his muttered charm; and those over whom he shook his lean face and matted locks, smiled ghastly at that sign that release and death were near. Within the enclosures, either lay supine, or stalked restless, the withered remains of the wild army. A sheep, and a horse, and a dog, were yet left them all to share for the day's meal. And the fire of flickering and crackling brushwood burned bright from a hollow amidst the loose stones; but the animals were yet unslain, and the dog crept by the fire, winking at it with dim eyes.

But over the lower part of the wall nearest to the barrow, leant three men. The wall there was so broken, that they could gaze over it on that grotesque yet dismal court; and the eyes of the three men, with a fierce and wolfish glare, were bent on Gryffyth.

Three princes were they of the great old line; far as Gryffyth they traced the fabulous honours of their race, to Hu-Gadarn and Prydain, and each thought it shame that Gryffyth should be lord over him! Each had had throne and court of his own; each his "white palace" of peeled willow wands—poor substitutes, O kings, for the palaces and towers that the arts of Rome had bequeathed your fathers! And each had been subjugated by the son of Llewellyn, when, in his day of might, he re-united under his sole sway all the multiform principalities of Wales, and regained, for a moment's splendour, the throne of Roderic the Great.

"Is it," said Owain, in a hollow whisper, "for yon man, whom heaven hath deserted, who could not keep

[1] Leges Wallicæ.

his very torque from the gripe of the Saxon, that we are to die on these hills, gnawing the flesh from our bones? Think ye not the hour is come?"

"The hour will come, when the sheep, and the horse, and the dog are devoured," replied Modred, "and when the whole force, as one man, will cry to Gryffyth, '*Thou* a king!—give us bread!'"

"It is well," said the third, an old man, leaning on a wand of solid silver, while the mountain wind, sweeping between the walls, played with the rags of his robe,—"it is well that the night's sally, less of war than of hunger, was foiled even of forage and food. Had the saints been with Gryffyth, who had dared to keep faith with Tostig the Saxon."

Owain laughed, a laugh hollow and false.

"Art thou Cymrian, and talkest of faith with a Saxon? Faith with the spoiler, the ravisher and butcher? But a Cymrian keeps faith with revenge; and Gryffyth's trunk should be still crownless and headless, though Tostig had never proffered the barter of safety and food. Hist! Gryffyth wakes from the black dream, and his eyes glow from under his hair."

And indeed at this moment the King raised himself on his elbow, and looked round with a haggard and fierce despair in his glittering eyes.

"Play to us, Harper; sing some song of the deeds of old!"

The bard mournfully strove to sweep the harp, but the chords were broken, and the note came discordant and shrill as the sigh of a wailing fiend.

"O King!" said the bard, "the music hath left the harp."

"Ha!" murmured Gryffyth, "and Hope the earth!

Bard, answer the son of Llewellyn. Oft in my halls hast thou sung the praise of the men that have been. In the halls of the race to come, will bards yet unborn sweep their harps to the deeds of thy King? Shall they tell of the day of Torques, by Llyn-Afangc, when the princes of Powys fled from his sword as the clouds from the blast of the wind? Shall they sing, as the Hirlas goes round, of his steeds of the sea, when no flag came in sight of his prows between the dark isle of the Druid [1] and the green pastures of Huerdan? [2] Or the towns that he fired, on the lands of the Saxon, when Rolf and the Northmen ran fast from his javelin and spear? Or say, Child of Truth, if all that is told of Gryffyth thy King shall be his woe and his shame?"

The bard swept his hand over his eyes, and answered:

"Bards unborn shall sing of Gryffyth the son of Llewellyn. But the song shall not dwell on the pomp of his power, when twenty sub-kings knelt at his throne, and his beacon was lighted in the holds of the Norman and Saxon. Bards shall sing of the hero, who fought every inch of crag and morass in the front of his men,—and on the heights of Penmaen-mawr, Fame recovers thy crown!"

"Then I have lived as my fathers in life, and shall live with their glory in death!" said Gryffyth; "and so the shadow hath passed from my soul." Then turning round, still propped upon his elbow, he fixed his proud eye upon Aldyth, and said gravely, "Wife, pale is thy face, and gloomy thy brow; mournest thou the throne or the man?"

Aldyth cast on her wild lord a look of more terror

[1] Mona, or Anglesea. [2] Ireland.

than compassion, a look without the grief that is gentle, or the love that reveres; and answered:

"What matter to thee my thoughts or my sufferings? The sword or the famine is the doom thou hast chosen. Listening to vain dreams from thy bard, or thine own pride as idle, thou disdainest life for us both: be it so; let us die!"

A strange blending of fondness and wrath troubled the pride on Gryffyth's features, uncouth and half savage as they were, but still noble and kingly.

"And what terror has death, if thou lovest me?" said he.

Aldyth shivered and turned aside. The unhappy King gazed hard on that face, which, despite sore trial and recent exposure to rough wind and weather, still retained the proverbial beauty of the Saxon women —but beauty without the glow of the heart, as a landscape from which sunlight has vanished; and as he gazed, the colour went and came fitfully over his swarthy cheeks whose hue contrasted the blue of his eye and the red tawny gold of his shaggy hair.

"Thou wouldst have me," he said at length, "send to Harold thy countryman; thou wouldst have me, *me* —rightful lord of all Britain—beg for mercy, and sue for life. Ah, traitress, and child of robber-sires, fair as Rowena art thou, but no Vortimer am I! Thou turnest in loathing from the lord whose marriage-gift was a crown; and the sleek form of thy Saxon Harold rises up through the clouds of the carnage."

All the fierce and dangerous jealousy of man's most human passion—when man loves and hates in a breath —trembled in the Cymrian's voice, and fired his troubled eye; for Aldyth's pale cheek blushed like the

rose, but she folded her arms haughtily on her breast, and made no reply.

"No," said Gryffyth, grinding teeth, white[1] and strong as those of a young hound. "No, Harold in vain sent me the casket; the jewel was gone. In vain thy form returned to my side; thy heart was away with thy captor: and not to save my life (were I so base as to seek it), but to see once more the face of him to whom this cold hand, in whose veins no pulse answers my own, had been given, if thy House had consulted its daughter, wouldst thou have me crouch like a lashed dog at the feet of my foe! Oh shame! shame! shame! oh worst perfidy of all! Oh sharp—sharper than Saxon sword or serpent's tooth, is—is—"

Tears gushed to those fierce eyes, and the proud King dared not trust to his voice.

Aldyth rose coldly. "Slay me if thou wilt—not insult me. I have said, 'Let us die!'"

With these words, and vouchsafing no look on her lord, she moved away towards the largest tower or cell, in which the single and rude chamber it contained had been set apart for her.

Gryffyth's eye followed her, softening gradually as her form receded, till lost to his sight. And then that peculiar household love, which in uncultivated breasts often survives trust and esteem, rushed back on his rough heart, and weakened it, as woman only can weaken the strong to whom Death is a thought of scorn.

He signed to his bard, who, during the conference

[1] The Welch were then, and still are, remarkable for the beauty of their teeth. Giraldus Cambrensis observes, as something very extraordinary, that *they cleaned them.*

between wife and lord, had retired to a distance, and said, with a writhing attempt to smile:

"Was there truth, thinkest thou, in the legend, that Guenever was false to King Arthur?"

"No," answered the bard, divining his lord's thought, "for Guenever survived not the King, and they were buried side by side in the Vale of Avallon."

"Thou art wise in the lore of the heart, and love hath been thy study from youth to grey hairs. Is it love, is it hate, that prefers death for the loved one, to the thought of her life as another's?" A look of the tenderest compassion passed over the bard's wan face, but vanished in reverence, as he bowed his head and answered:

"O King, who shall say what note the wind calls from the harp, what impulse love wakes in the soul—now soft and now stern? But," he added, raising his form, and, with a dread calm on his brow, "but the love of a king brooks no thought of dishonour; and she who hath laid her head on his breast should sleep in his grave."

"Thou wilt outlive me," said Gryffyth, abruptly. "This carn be my tomb!"

"And if so," said the bard, "thou shalt sleep not alone. In this carn what thou lovest best shall be buried by thy side; the bard shall raise his song over thy grave, and the bosses of shields shall be placed at intervals, as rises and falls the sound of song. Over the grave of *two* shall a new mound arise, and we will bid the mound speak to others in the fair days to come. But distant yet be the hour when the mighty shall be laid low! and the tongue of thy bard may yet chant the rush of the lion from the toils and the spears. Hope still!"

Gryffyth, for answer, leant on the harper's shoulder, and pointed silently to the sea, that lay, lake-like at the distance, dark-studded with the Saxon fleet. Then turning, his hands stretched over the forms that, hollow-eyed and ghost-like, flitted between the walls, or lay dying, but mute around the waterspring. His hand then dropped, and rested on the hilt of his sword.

At this moment there was a sudden commotion at the outer entrance of the wall; the crowd gathered to one spot, and there was a loud hum of voices. In a few moments one of the Welch scouts came into the enclosure, and the chiefs of the royal tribes followed him to the carn on which the King stood.

"Of what tellest thou?" said Gryffyth, resuming on the instant all the royalty of his bearing.

"At the mouth of the pass," said the scout, kneeling, "there are a monk bearing the holy rood, and a chief, unarmed. And the monk is Evan, the Cymrian, of Gwentland; and the chief, by his voice, seemeth not to be Saxon. The monk bade me give thee these tokens" (and the scout displayed the broken torque which the King had left in the grasp of Harold, together with a live falcon belled and blinded), "and bade me say thus to the King: Harold the Earl greets Gryffyth, son of Llewellyn, and sends him, in proof of good will, the richest prize he hath ever won from a foe; and a hawk, from Llandudno;—that bird which chief and equal give to equal and chief. And he prays Gryffyth, son of Llewellyn, for the sake of his realm and his people, to grant hearing to his nuncius."

A murmur broke from the chiefs—a murmur of joy and surprise from all, save the three conspirators, who interchanged anxious and fiery glances. Gryffyth's hand had already closed, while he uttered a cry that

seemed of rapture, on the collar of gold; for the loss of that collar had stung him, perhaps more than the loss of the crown of all Wales. And his heart, so generous and large, amidst all its rude passions, was touched by the speech and the tokens that honoured the fallen outlaw both as foe and as king. Yet in his face there was still seen a moody and proud struggle; he paused before he turned to the chiefs.

"What counsel ye—ye strong in battle, and wise in debate?" said he.

With one voice all, save the Fatal Three, exclaimed: "Hear the monk, O King!"

"Shall we dissuade?" whispered Modred to the old chief, his accomplice.

"No; for so doing, we shall offend all:—and we must win all."

Then the bard stepped into the ring. And the ring was hushed, for wise is ever the counsel of him whose book is the human heart.

"Hear the Saxons," said he, briefly, and with an air of command when addressing others, which contrasted strongly his tender respect to the King; "hear the Saxons, but not in these walls. Let no man from the foe see our strength or our weakness. We are still mighty and impregnable, while our dwelling is in the realm of the Unknown. Let the King, and his officers of state, and his chieftains of battle, descend to the pass. And behind, at the distance, let the spearmen range from cliff to cliff, as a ladder of steel; so will their numbers seem the greater."

"Thou speakest well," said the King.

Meanwhile the knight and the monk waited below at that terrible pass,[1] which then lay between moun-

[1] I believe it was not till the last century that a good road took the place of this pass.

tain and river, and over which the precipices frowned, with a sense of horror and weight. Looking up, the knight murmured:

"With those stones and crags to roll down on a marching army, the place well defies storm and assault; and a hundred on the height would overmatch thousands below."

He then turned to address a few words, with all the far-famed courtesy of Norman and Frank, to the Welch guards at the outpost. They were picked men; the strongest and best armed and best fed of the group. But they shook their heads and answered not, gazing at him fiercely, and showing their white teeth, as dogs at a bear before they are loosened from the band.

"They understand me not, poor languageless savages!" said Mallet de Graville, turning to the monk, who stood by with the lifted rood; "speak to them in their own jargon."

"Nay," said the Welch monk, who, though of a rival tribe from South Wales, and at the service of Harold, was esteemed throughout the land for piety and learning, "they will not open mouth till the King's orders come to receive or dismiss us unheard."

"Dismiss us unheard!" repeated the punctilious Norman; "even this poor barbarous King can scarcely be so strange to all comely and gentle usage, as to put such insult on Guillaume Mallet de Graville. But," added the knight, colouring, "I forgot that he is not advised of my name and land; and, indeed, sith thou art to be spokesman, I marvel why Harold should have prayed my service at all, at the risk of subjecting a Norman knight to affronts contumelious."

"Peradventure," replied Evan, "peradventure thou

hast something to whisper apart to the King, which, as stranger and warrior, none will venture to question; but which from me, as countryman and priest, would excite the jealous suspicions of those around him."

"I conceive thee," said De Graville. "And see, spears are gleaming down the path; and *per pedes Domini*, yon chief with the mantle, and circlet of gold on his head, is the cat-king that so spitted and scratched in the *mêlée* last night."

"Heed well thy tongue," said Evan, alarmed; "no jests with the leader of men."

"Knowest thou, good monk, that a facete and most *gentil* Roman (if the saintly writer from whom I take the citation reports aright—for, alas! I know not where myself to purchase, or to steal, one copy of Horatius Flaccus) hath said '*Dulce est desipere in loco.*' It is sweet to jest, but not within reach of claws, whether of kaisars or cats."

Therewith the knight drew up his spare but stately figure, and arranging his robe with grace and dignity, awaited the coming chief.

Down the paths, one by one, came first the chiefs, privileged by birth to attend the King; and each, as he reached the mouth of the pass, drew on the upper side among the stones of the rough ground. Then a banner, tattered and torn, with the lion ensign that the Welch princes had substituted for the old national dragon, which the Saxon of Wessex had appropriated to themselves,[1] preceded the steps of the King. Be-

[1] The Saxons of Wessex seem to have adopted the Dragon for their ensign, from an early period. It was probably for this reason that it was assumed by Edward Ironsides, as the hero of the Saxons; the principality of Wessex forming the most important portion of the pure Saxon race, while its founder was the ancestor of the imperial house of the Basileus

hind him came his falconer and bard, and the rest of his scanty household. The King halted in the pass, a few steps from the Norman knight; and Mallet de Graville, though accustomed to the majestic mien of Duke William, and the practised state of the princes of France and Flanders, felt an involuntary thrill of admiration at the bearing of the great child of Nature with his foot on his father's soil.

Small and slight as was his stature, worn and ragged his mantle of state, there was that in the erect mien and steady eye of the Cymrian hero, which showed one conscious of authority, and potent in will; and the wave of his hand to the knight was the gesture of a prince on his throne. Nor, indeed, was that brave and ill-fated chief without some irregular gleams of mental cultivation, which under happier auspices, might have centred into steadfast light. Though the learning which had once existed in Wales (the last legacy of Rome) had long since expired in broil and blood, and youths no longer flocked to the colleges of Caerleon, and priests no longer adorned the casuistical theology of the age, Gryffyth himself, the son of a wise and famous father,[1] had received an education beyond the average of Saxon kings. But, intensely national, his mind had

of Britain. The dragon seems also to have been a Norman ensign. The lions or leopards, popularly assigned to the Conqueror, are certainly a later invention. There is no appearance of them on the banners and shields of the Norman army in the Bayeux tapestry. Armorial bearings were in use amongst the Welch, and even the Saxons, long before heraldry was reduced to a science by the Franks and Normans. And the dragon, which is supposed by many critics to be borrowed from the east, through the Saracens, certainly existed as an armorial ensign with the Cymrians before they could have had any obligation to the songs and legends of that people.

[1] "In whose time the earth brought forth double, and there was neither beggar nor poor man from the North to the South Sea."—POWELL'S *Hist. of Wales,* p. 83.

turned from all other literature, to the legends, and songs, and chronicles of his land; and if he is the best scholar who best understands his own tongue and its treasures, Gryffyth was the most erudite prince of his age.

His natural talents, for war especially, were considerable; and judged fairly—not as mated with an empty treasury, without other army than the capricious will of his subjects afforded, and amidst his bitterest foes in the jealous chiefs of his own country, against the disciplined force and comparative civilisation of the Saxon—but as compared with all the other princes of Wales, in warfare, to which he was habituated, and in which chances were even, the fallen son of Llewellyn had been the most renowned leader that Cymry had known since the death of the great Roderic.

So there he stood; his attendants ghastly with famine, drawn up on the unequal ground; above, on the heights, and rising from the stone crags, long lines of spears artfully placed; and, watching him with deathful eyes, somewhat in his rear, the Traitor Three.

"Speak, father, or chief," said the Welch King in his native tongue; "what would Harold the Earl of Gryffyth the King?"

Then the monk took up the word and spoke.

"Health to Gryffyth-ap-Llewellyn, his chiefs and his people! Thus saith Harold, King Edward's thegn: By land all the passes are watched; by sea all the waves are our own. Our swords rest in our sheaths; but famine marches each hour to gride and to slay. Instead of sure death from the hunger, take sure life from the foe. Free pardon to all, chiefs and people, and safe return to their homes,—save Gryffyth alone. Let him come forth, not as victim and outlaw, not with bent form

and clasped hands, but as chief meeting chief, with his household of state. Harold will meet him, in honour, at the gates of the fort. Let Gryffyth submit to King Edward, and ride with Harold to the Court of Basileus. Harold promises him life, and will plead for his pardon. And though the peace of this realm, and the fortune of war, forbid Harold to say, 'Thou shalt yet be a king;' yet thy crown, son of Llewellyn, shall at least be assured in the line of thy fathers, and the race of Cadwallader shall still reign in Cymry."

The monk paused, and hope and joy were in the faces of the famished chiefs; while two of the Traitor Three suddenly left their post, and sped to tell the message to the spearmen and multitudes above. Modred, the third conspirator, laid his hand on his hilt, and stole near to see the face of the King;—the face of the King was dark and angry, as a midnight of storm.

Then, raising the cross on high, Evan resumed.

"And I, though of the people of Gwentland, which the arms of Gryffyth have wasted, and whose prince fell beneath Gryffyth's sword on the hearth of his hall —I, as God's servant, the brother of all I behold, and, as son of the soil, mourning over the slaughter of its latest defenders—I, by this symbol of love and command, which I raise to the heaven, adjure thee, O King, to give ear to the mission of peace,—to cast down the grim pride of earth. And instead of the crown of a day, fix thy hopes on the crown everlasting. For much shall be pardoned to thee in thine hour of pomp and of conquest, if now thou savest from doom and from death the last lives over which thou art lord."

It was during this solemn appeal that the knight, marking the sign announced to him, and drawing close

to Gryffyth, pressed the ring into the King's hand, and whispered:

"Obey by this pledge. Thou knowest Harold is true, and thy head is sold by thine own people."

The King cast a haggard eye at the speaker, and then at the ring, over which his hand closed with a convulsive spasm. And at that dread instant the man prevailed over the King; and far away from people and monk, from adjuration and duty, fled his heart on the wings of the storm—fled to the cold wife he distrusted: and the pledge that should assure him of life, seemed as a love-token insulting his fall:—Amidst all the roar of roused passions, loudest of all was the hiss of the jealous fiend.

As the monk ceased, the thrill of the audience was perceptible, and a deep silence was followed by a general murmur, as if to constrain the King.

Then the pride of the despot chief rose up to second the wrath of the suspecting man. The red spot flushed the dark cheek, and he tossed the neglected hair from his brow.

He made one stride towards the monk, and said, in a voice loud, and deep, and slow, rolling far up the hill:

"Monk, thou hast said; and now hear the reply of the son of Llewellyn, the true heir of Roderic the Great, who from the heights of Eryri saw all the lands of the Cymrian sleeping under the dragon of Uther. King was I born, and king will I die. I will not ride by the side of the Saxon to the feet of Edward, the son of the spoiler. I will not, to purchase base life, surrender the claim, vain before men and the hour, but solemn before God and posterity—the claim of my line and my people. All Britain is ours—all the island of Pines. And the

children of Hengist are traitors and rebels—not the heirs of Ambrosius and Uther. Say to Harold the Saxon, Ye have left us but the tomb of the Druid and the hills of the eagle; but freedom and royalty are ours, in life and in death—not for you to demand them, not for us to betray. Nor fear ye, O my chiefs, few, but unmatched in glory and truth; fear not ye to perish by the hunger thus denounced as our doom, on these heights that command the fruits of our own fields! No, die we may, but not mute and revengeless. Go back, whispering warrior; go back, false son of Cymry —and tell Harold to look well to his walls and his trenches. We will vouchsafe him grace for his grace—we will not take him by surprise, nor under cloud of the night. With the gleam of our spears and the clash of our shields, we will come from the hill: and, famine-worn as he deems us, hold a feast in his walls which the eagles of Snowdon spread their pinions to share!"

"Rash man and unhappy!" cried the monk; "what curse drawest thou down on thy head! Wilt thou be the murtherer of thy men, in strife unavailing and vain? Heaven holds thee guilty of all the blood thou shalt cause to be shed."

"Be dumb!—hush thy screech, lying raven!" exclaimed Gryffyth, his eyes darting fire and his slight form dilating. "Once, priest and monk went before us to inspire, not to daunt; and our cry, Alleluia! was taught us by the saints of the Church, on the day when Saxons, fierce and many as Harold's, fell on the field of Maes-Garmon. No, the curse is on the head of the invader, not on those who defend hearth and altar. Yea, as the song to the bard, the CURSE leaps through my veins, and rushes forth from my lips. By the land they have ravaged; by the gore they have spilt; on these

crags, our last refuge; below the carn on yon heights, where the Dead stir to hear me,—I launch the curse of the wronged and the doomed on the children of Hengist! They in turn shall know the steel of the stranger —their crown shall be shivered as glass, and their nobles be as slaves in the land. And the line of Hengist and Cerdic shall be rased from the roll of empire. And the ghosts of our fathers shall glide, appeased, over the grave of their nation. But we—WE, though weak in the body, in the soul shall be strong to the last! The ploughshare may pass over our cities, but the soil shall be trod by our steps, and our deeds keep our language alive in the songs of our bards. Nor in, the great Judgment Day, shall any race but the race of Cymry rise from their graves in this corner of earth, to answer for the sins of the brave!" [1]

So impressive the voice, so grand the brow, and sublime the wild gesture of the King, as he thus spoke, that not only the monk himself was awed; not only, though he understood not the words, did the Norman knight bow his head, as a child when the lightning he fears as by instinct flashes out from the cloud,—but even the sullen and wide-spreading discontent at work

[1] "During the military expeditions made in our days against South Wales, an old Welchman, at Pencadair, who had faithfully adhered to him (Henry II.), being desired to give his opinion about the royal army, and whether he thought that of the rebels would make resistance, and what he thought would be the final event of this war, replied: 'This nation, O King, may now, as in former times, be harassed, and, in a great measure, be weakened and destroyed by you and other powers: and it will often prevail by its laudable exertions, but it can never be totally subdued by the wrath of man, unless the wrath of God shall concur. *Nor do I think that any other nation than this of Wales, or any other language (whatever may hereafter come to pass), shall in the day of severe examination before the Supreme Judge answer for this corner of the earth!*'"—HOARE'S *Giraldus Cambrensis*, vol. i. p. 361.

among most of the chiefs was arrested for a moment. But the spearmen and multitude above, excited by the tidings of safety to life, and worn out by repeated defeat, and the dread fear of famine, too remote to hear the King, were listening eagerly to the insidious addresses of the two stealthy conspirators, creeping from rank to rank; and already they began to sway and move, and sweep slowly down towards the King.

Recovering his surprise, the Norman again neared Gryffyth, and began to re-urge his mission of peace. But the chief waved him back sternly, and said aloud, though in Saxon:

"No secrets can pass between Harold and me. This much alone, take thou back as answer: I thank the Earl, for myself, my Queen, and my people. Noble have been his courtesies, as foe; as foe I thank him—as king, defy. The torque he hath returned to my hand, he shall see again ere the sun set. Messengers, ye are answered. Withdraw, and speed fast, that we may pass not your steps on the road."

The monk sighed, and cast a look of holy compassion over the circle; and a pleased man was he to see in the faces of most there, that the King was alone in his fierce defiance. Then lifting again the rood, he turned away, and with him went the Norman.

The retirement of the messengers was the signal for one burst of remonstrance from the chiefs—the signal for the voice and the deeds of the Fatal Three. Down from the heights sprang and rushed the angry and turbulent multitudes; round the King came the bard and the falconer, and some faithful few.

The great uproar of many voices caused the monk and the knight to pause abruptly in their descent, and

turn to look behind. They could see the crowd rushing down from the higher steeps; but on the spot itself which they had so lately left, the nature of the ground only permitted a confused view of spear points, lifted swords, and heads crowned with shaggy locks, swaying to and fro.

"What means all this commotion?" asked the knight, with his hand on his sword.

"Hist!" said the monk, pale as ashes, and leaning for support upon the cross.

Suddenly, above the hubbub, was heard the voice of the King, in accents of menace and wrath, singularly distinct and clear; it was followed by a moment's silence—a moment's silence followed by the clatter of arms, a yell, and a howl, and the indescribable shock of men.

And suddenly again was heard a voice that seemed that of the King, but no longer distinct and clear!—was it laugh?—was it groan?

All was hushed; the monk was on his knees in prayer; the knight's sword was bare in his hand. All was hushed—and the spears stood still in the air; when there was again a cry, as multitudinous, but less savage than before. And the Welch came down the pass, and down the crags.

The knight placed his back to a rock. "They have orders to murther us," he murmured; "but woe to the first who come within reach of my sword!"

Down swarmed the Welchmen, nearer and nearer; and in the midst of them three chiefs—the Fatal Three. And the old chief bore in his hand a pole or spear, and on the top of that spear, trickling gore step by step, was the trunkless head of Gryffyth the King.

"This," said the old chief, as he drew near, "this is our answer to Harold the Earl. We will go with ye."

"Food! food!" cried the multitude.

And the three chiefs (one on either side the trunkless head that the third bore aloft) whispered, "We are avenged!"

NOTES

Note (A), page 15.

There are various accounts in the Chroniclers as to the stature of William the First; some represent him as a giant, others as of just or middle height. Considering the vulgar inclination to attribute to a hero's stature the qualities of the mind (and putting out of all question the arguments that rest on the pretended size of the disburied bones—for which the authorities are really less respectable than those on which we are called upon to believe that the skeleton of the mythical Gawaine measured eight feet), we prefer that supposition, as to the physical proportions, which is most in harmony with the usual laws of Nature. It is rare, indeed, that a great intellect is found in the form of a giant.

Note (B), page 30.

Game Laws before the Conquest.

Under the Saxon kings a man might, it is true, hunt in his own grounds, but that was a privilege that could benefit few but thegns; and over cultivated ground or shire-land there was not the same sport to be found as in the vast wastes called forest-land, and which mainly belonged to the kings.

Edward declares, in a law recorded in a volume of the Exchequer, "I will that *all* men do abstain from hunting in my woods, and that my will shall be obeyed under penalty of life." [1]

Edgar, the darling monarch of the monks, and, indeed, one of the most popular of the Anglo-Saxon kings, was so rigorous in his forest-laws that the thegns murmured as well as

[1] Thomson's Essay on Magna Charta.

the lower husbandmen, who had been accustomed to use the woods for pasturage and boscage. Canute's forest-laws were meant as a liberal concession to public feeling on the subject; they are more definite than Edgar's, but terribly stringent; if a freeman killed one of the king's deer, or struck his forester, he lost his freedom and became a penal serf (white theowe) —that is, he ranked with felons. Nevertheless, Canute allowed bishops, abbots, and thegns to hunt in his woods—a privilege restored by Henry III. The nobility, after the Conquest, being excluded from the royal chases, petitioned to enclose parks, as early even as the reign of William I.; and by the time of his son, Henry I., parks became so common as to be at once a ridicule and a grievance.

Note (C), page 37.

Belin's Gate.

Verstegan combats the Welsh antiquaries who would appropriate this gate to the British deity Bal or Beli; and says, if so, it would not have been called by a name half Saxon, half British, gate (geat) being Saxon; but rather Belinsport than Belinsgate. This is no very strong argument; for, in the Norman time, many compound words were half Norman, half Saxon. But, in truth, Belin was a Teuton deity, whose worship pervaded all Gaul; and the Saxons might either have continued, therefore, the name they found, or given it themselves from their own god. I am not inclined, however, to contend that any deity, Saxon or British, gave the name, or that Billing is not, after all, the right orthography. Billing, like all words ending in *ing*, has something very Danish in its sound; and the name is quite as likely to have been given by the Danes as by the Saxons.

Note (D), page 41.

Vineyards in England.

The question whether or not real vineyards were grown, or real wine made from them, in England has been a very vexed question among the antiquaries. But it is scarcely possible to read Pegge's dispute with Daines Barrington in the *Archæ-*

ologia without deciding both questions in the affirmative.—See *Archæol.* vol. iii. p. 53. An engraving of the Saxon wine-press is given in STRUTT'S *Horda.* Vineyards fell into disuse, either by treaty with France, or Gascony falling into the hands of the English. But vineyards were cultivated by private gentlemen as late as 1621. Our first wines from Bordeaux—the true country of Bacchus—appear to have been imported about 1154, by the marriage of Henry II. with Eleanor of Aquitaine.

NOTE (E), PAGES 75, 84.

Lanfranc, the first Anglo-Norman Archbishop of Canterbury.

Lanfranc was, in all respects, one of the most remarkable men of the eleventh century. He was born in Pavia, about 1105. His family was noble—his father ranked amongst the magistrature of Pavia, the Lombard capital. From his earliest youth he gave himself up, with all a scholar's zeal, to the liberal arts, and the special knowledge of law, civil and ecclesiastical. He studied at Cologne, and afterwards taught and practised law in his own country. "While yet extremely young," says one of the lively chroniclers, "he triumphed over the ablest advocates, and the torrents of his eloquence confounded the subtlest rhetorician." His decisions were received as authorities by the Italian jurisconsults and tribunals. His mind, to judge both by his history and his peculiar reputation (for probably few, if any, students of our day can pretend to more than a partial or superficial acquaintance with his writings), was one that delighted in subtleties and casuistical refinements; but a sense too large and commanding for those studies which amuse but never satisfy the higher intellect, became disgusted betimes with mere legal dialectics. Those grand and absorbing mysteries connected with the Christian faith and the Roman Church (grand and absorbing in proportion as their premises are taken by religious belief as mathematical axioms already proven) seized hold of his imagination, and tasked to the depth his inquisitive reason. The Chronicle of Knyghton cites an interesting anecdote of his life at this, its important, crisis. He had retired to a solitary spot, beside the Seine, to meditate on the mysterious essence of the Trinity, when he saw a boy ladling out the waters of the river that

ran before him into a little well. His curiosity arrested, he asked "what the boy proposed to do?" The boy replied, "To empty yon deep into this well." "That canst thou never do," said the scholar. "Nor canst thou," answered the boy, "exhaust the deep on which thou dost meditate into the well of thy reason." Therewith the speaker vanished, and Lanfranc, resigning the hope to achieve the mighty mystery, threw himself at once into the arms of faith, and took his refuge in the monastery of Bec.

The tale may be a legend, but not an idle one. Perhaps he related it himself as a parable, and by the fiction explained the process of thought that decided his career. In the prime of his manhood, about 1042, when he was thirty-seven years old, and in the zenith of his scholarly fame, he professed. The Convent of Bec had been lately founded, under Herluin, the first abbot; there Lanfranc opened a school, which became one of the most famous throughout the west of Europe. Indeed, under the Lombard's influence, the then obscure Convent of Bec, to which the solitude of the site and the poverty of the endowment allured his choice, grew the Academe of the age. "It was," says Oderic, in his charming chronicle, "it was under such a master that the Normans received their first notions of literature; from that school emerged the multitude of eloquent philosophers who adorned alike divinity and science. From France, Gascony, Bretagne, Flanders, scholars thronged to receive his lessons." [1]

At first, as superficially stated in the tale, Lanfranc had taken part against the marriage of William with Matilda of Flanders—a marriage clearly contrary to the formal canons of the Roman Church, and was banished by the fiery Duke; though William's displeasure gave way at "the decent joke" (*jocus decens*), recorded in the text. At Rome, however, his influence, arguments, and eloquence were all enlisted on the side of William: and it was to the scholar of Pavia that the great Norman owed the ultimate sanction of his marriage, and the repeal of the interdict that excommunicated his realm.[2]

[1] Orderic. Vital. lib. 4.

[2] The date of William's marriage has been variously stated in English and Norman history, but is usually fixed in 1051–2. M. Pluquet, however, in a note to his edition of the "Roman de Rou," says that the only authority for the date of that

At Rome he assisted in the council held 1059 (the year wherein the ban of the Church was finally and formally taken from Normandy), at which the famous Berenger, Archdeacon of Angers (against whom he had waged a polemical controversy that did more than all else to secure his repute at the Pontifical Court), abjured "his heresies" as to the Real Presence in the sacrament of the Eucharist.

In 1062, or 1063, Duke William, against the Lombard's own will (for Lanfranc genuinely loved the liberty of letters more than vulgar power), raised him to the abbacy of St. Stephen of Caen. From that time, his ascendancy over his haughty lord was absolute. The contemporary historian (William of Poitiers), says that "William respected him as a father, venerated him as a preceptor, and cherished him as a brother or son." He confided to him his own designs; and committed to him the entire superintendence of the ecclesiastical orders throughout Normandy. Eminent no less for his practical genius in affairs, than for his rare piety and theological learning, Lanfranc attained indeed to the true ideal of the Scholar; to whom, of all men, nothing that is human should be foreign; whose closet is but a hermit's cell, unless it is the microcosm that embraces the mart and the forum; who by the reflective part of his nature seizes the higher region of philosophy—by the energetic, is attracted to the central focus of action. For scholarship is but the parent of ideas; and ideas are the parents of action.

After the conquest, as prelate of Canterbury, Lanfranc became the second man in the kingdom—happy, perhaps, for England had he been the first; for all the anecdotes recorded of him show a deep and genuine sympathy with the oppressed population. But William the King of the English escaped from the control which Lanfranc had imposed on the Duke of the Normans. The scholar had strengthened the aspirer; he could only imperfectly influence the conqueror.

Lanfranc was not, it is true, a faultless character. He was a priest, a lawyer, and a man of the world—three characters

marriage is in the Chronicle of Tours, and it is there referred to 1053. It would seem that the Papal excommunication was not actually taken off till 1059; nor the formal dispensation for the marriage granted till 1063.

hard to amalgamate into perfection, especially in the eleventh century. But he stands in gigantic and brilliant contrast to the rest of our priesthood in his own day, both in the superiority of his virtues, and in his exemption from the ordinary vices. He regarded the cruelties of Odo of Bayeux with detestation, opposed him with firmness, and ultimately, to the joy of all England, ruined his power. He gave a great impetus to learning; he set a high example to his monks, in his freedom from the mercenary sins of their order; he laid the foundations of a powerful and splendid church, which, only because it failed in future Lanfrancs, failed in effecting the civilisation of which he designed it to be the instrument. He refused to crown William Rufus, until that king had sworn to govern according to law and to right; and died, though a Norman usurper, honoured and beloved by the Saxon people.

Scholar, and morning star of light in the dark age of force and fraud, it is easier to praise thy life, than to track through the length of centuries all the measureless and invisible benefits which the life of one scholar bequeaths to the world—in the souls it awakens—in the thoughts it suggests! [1]

Note (F), page 87.

Edward the Confessor's reply to Magnus of Denmark who claimed his Crown.

On rare occasions Edward was not without touches of a brave kingly nature.

Snorro Sturleson gives us a noble and spirited reply of the Confessor to Magnus, who, as heir of Canute, claimed the English crown; it concludes thus:—"Now, he (Hardicanute) died, and then it was the resolution of all the people of the country to take me, for the king here in England. So long as I had no kingly title I served my superiors in all respects, like those who had no claims by birth to land or kingdom. Now, however, I have received the kingly title, and am consecrated king; I have established my royal dignity and authority, as

[1] For authorities for the above sketch, and for many interesting details of Lanfranc's character, see Orderic. Vital. Hen. de Knyghton, lib. ii. Gervasius; and the life of Lanfranc, to be found in the collection of his Works, &c.

my father before me; and while I live I will not renounce my title. If King Magnus comes here with an army, I will gather no army against him; but he shall only get the opportunity of taking England when he has taken my life. Tell him these words of mine." If we may consider this reply to be authentic, it is significant, as proof that Edward rests his title on the resolution of the people to take him for king; and counts as nothing, in comparison, his hereditary claims. This, together with the general tone of the reply, particularly the passage in which he implies that he trusts his defence not to his army but his people—makes it probable that Godwin dictated the answer; and, indeed, Edward himself could not have couched it, either in Saxon or Danish. But the King is equally entitled to the credit of it, whether he composed it, or whether he merely approved and sanctioned its gallant tone and its princely sentiment.

NOTE (G), PAGE 90.

Heralds.

So much of the "pride, pomp, and circumstance" which invest the Age of Chivalry is borrowed from these companions of princes, and blazoners of noble deeds, that it may interest the reader, if I set briefly before him what our best antiquaries have said as to their first appearance in our own history.

Camden (somewhat, I fear, too rashly) says, that "their reputation, honour, and name began in the time of Charlemagne." The first mention of heralds in England occurs in the reign of Edward III., a reign in which Chivalry was at its dazzling zenith. Whitlock says, "that some derive the name of Herald from Hereauld," a Saxon word (old soldier, or old master), "because anciently they were chosen from veteran soldiers." Joseph Holland says, "I find that Malcolm, King of Scots, sent a herald unto William the Conqueror, to treat of a peace, when both armies were in order of battle." Agard affirms, that "at the conquest there was no practice of heraldry;" and observes truly, "that the Conqueror used a monk for his messenger to King Harold."

To this I may add, that monks or priests also fulfil the office of heralds in the old French and Norman Chronicles. Thus Charles the Simple sends an archbishop to treat with

Rolfganger; Louis the Debonnair sends to Mormon, chief of the Bretons, "a sage and prudent abbot." But in the Saxon times, the nuncius (a word still used in heraldic Latin) was in the regular service both of the King and the great Earls. The Saxon name for such a messenger was *bode,* and when employed in hostile negotiations, he was styled *warbode.* The messengers between Godwin and the King would seem, by the general sense of the chronicles, to have been certain thegns acting as mediators.

Note (H), page 126.

The Fylgia, or Tutelary Spirit.

This lovely superstition in the Scandinavian belief is the more remarkable because it does not appear in the creed of the Germanic Teutons, and is closely allied with the good angel, or guardian genius, of the Persians. It forms, therefore, one of the arguments that favour the Asiatic origin of the Norsemen.

The Fylgia (*following,* or attendant, spirit) was always represented as a female. Her influence was not uniformly favourable, though such was its general characteristic. She was capable of revenge if neglected, but had the devotion of her sex when properly treated. Mr. Grenville Pigott, in his popular work, entitled "A Manual of Scandinavian Mythology," relates an interesting legend with respect to one of these supernatural ladies:—

A Scandinavian warrior, Halfred Vandrædakald, having embraced Christianity, and being attacked by a disease which he thought mortal, was naturally anxious that a spirit who had accompanied him through his pagan career should not attend him into that other world, where her society might involve him in disagreeable consequences. The persevering Fylgia, however, in the shape of a fair maiden, walked on the waves of the sea after her viking's ship. She came thus in sight of all the crew; and Halfred, recognising his Fylgia, told her point blank that their connection was at an end for ever. The forsaken Fylgia had a high spirit of her own, and she then asked Thorold "if he would take her." Thorold ungallantly refused; but Halfred the younger said, "Maiden, I will take thee." [1]

[1] Pigott's Scand. Mythol. p. 360. Half. Vand. Saga.

In the various Norse Saga there are many anecdotes of these spirits, who are always charming, because, with their less earthly attributes, they always blend something of the woman. The poetry embodied in their existence is of a softer and more humane character than that common with the stern and vast demons of the Scandinavian mythology.

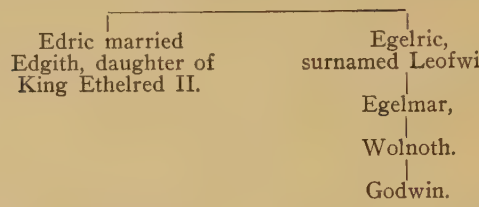
NOTE (I), PAGE 135.

The Origin of Earl Godwin.

Sharon Turner quotes from the Knytlinga Saga what he calls "an explanation of Godwin's career or parentage, which no other document affords;" viz.—"that Ulf, a Danish chief, after the battle of Skorstein, between Canute and Edmund Ironsides, pursued the English fugitives into a wood, lost his way, met, on the morning, a Saxon youth driving cattle to their pasture, asked him to direct him in safety to Canute's ships, and offered him the bribe of a gold ring for his guidance; the young herdsman refused the bribe, but sheltered the Dane in the cottage of his father (who is represented as a mere peasant), and conducted him the next morning to the Danish camp; previously to which, the youth's father represented to Ulf, that his son, Godwin, could never, after aiding a Dane to escape, rest in safety with his countrymen, and besought him to befriend his son's fortunes with Canute." The Dane promised, and kept his word; hence Godwin's rise. Thierry, in his "History of the Norman Conquest," tells the same story, on the authority of Torfæus, Hist. Rer. Norweg. Now I need not say to any scholar in our early history, that the Norse Chronicles, abounding with romance and legend, are never to be received as authorities *counter* to our own records, though occasionally valuable to supply omissions in the latter; and, unfortunately for this pretty story, we have *against* it the direct statements of the very best authorities we possess, viz. The Saxon Chronicle and Florence of Worcester. The Saxon Chronicle expressly tells us that Godwin's father was Childe of Sussex (Florence calls him minister or thegn of Sussex [1]), and that Wolnoth was nephew to Edric, the all-powerful Earl

[1] "Suthsaxonum Ministrum Wolfnothem." Flor. Wig.

or Duke of Mercia. Florence confirms this statement, and gives the pedigree, which may be deduced as follows:



Thus this "old peasant," as the North Chronicles call Wolnoth, was, according to our most unquestionable authorities, a thegn of one of the most important divisions in England, and a member of the most powerful family in the kingdom! Now, if our Saxon authorities needed any aid from probabilities, it is scarcely worth asking, which is the more probable, that the son of a Saxon herdsman should in a few years rise to such power as to marry the sister of the royal Danish Conqueror—or that that honour should be conferred on the most able member of a house already allied to Saxon royalty, and which evidently retained its power after the fall of its head, the treacherous Edric Streone! Even after the Conquest, one of Streone's nephews, Edricus Sylvaticus, is mentioned (Simon. Dunelm.) as "a very powerful thegn." Upon the whole, the account given of Godwin's rise in the text of the work appears the most correct that conjectures, based on our scanty historical information, will allow.

In 1009 A.D., Wolnoth, the Childe or Thegn of Sussex, defeats the fleets of Ethelred, under his uncle Brightric, and goes therefore into rebellion. Thus when, in 1014 (five years afterwards), Canute is chosen king by all the fleet, it is probable that Wolnoth and Godwin, his son, espoused his cause; and that Godwin, subsequently presented to Canute as a young noble of great promise, was favoured by that sagacious king, and ultimately honoured with the hand, first of his sister, secondly of his niece, as a mode of conciliating the Saxon thegns.

Note (K), page 276.

The want of Fortresses in England.

The Saxons were sad destroyers. They destroyed the strongholds which the Briton had received from the Roman, and built very few others. Thus the land was left open to the Danes. Alfred, sensible of this defect, repaired the walls of London and other cities, and urgently recommended his nobles and prelates to build fortresses, but could not persuade them. His great-souled daughter, Elfleda, was the only imitator of his example. She built eight castles in three years.[1]

It was thus that in a country, in which the general features do not allow of protracted warfare, the inhabitants were always at the hazard of a single pitched battle. Subsequent to the Conquest, in the reign of John, it was, in truth, the strong castle of Dover, on the siege of which Prince Louis lost so much time, that saved the realm of England from passing to a French dynasty: and as, in later periods, strongholds fell again into decay, so it is remarkable to observe how easily the country was overrun after any signal victory of one of the contending parties. In this truth, the Wars of the Roses abound with much instruction. The handful of foreign mercenaries with which Henry VII. won his crown,—though the real heir, the Earl of Warwick (granting Edward IV.'s children to be illegitimate, which they clearly were according to the rites of the Church), had never lost his claim, by the defeat of Richard at Bosworth;—the march of the Pretender to Derby,—the dismay it spread throughout England,—and the certainty of his conquest had he proceeded;—the easy victory of William III. at a time when certainly the bulk of the nation was opposed to his cause;—are all facts pregnant with warnings, to which we are as blind as we were in the days of Alfred.

Note (L), page 305.

The Ruins of Penmaen-mawr.

In Camden's *Britannia* there is an account of the remarkable relics assigned, in the text, to the last refuge of Gryffyth

[1] Asser. de Reb. Gest. Alf. pp. 17, 18.

ap Llewellyn, taken from a manuscript by Sir John Wynne in the time of Charles I. In this account are minutely described, "ruinous walls of an exceeding strong fortification, compassed with a treble wall, and, within each wall, the foundations of at least one hundred towers, about six yards in diameter within the walls. This castle seems (while it stood) impregnable; there being no way to offer any assault on it, the hill being so very high, steep, and rocky, and the walls of such strength,—the way or entrance into it ascending with many turnings, so that one hundred men might defend themselves against a whole legion; and yet it should seem that there were lodgings within those walls for twenty thousand men.

"By the tradition we receive from our ancestors, this was the strongest refuge, or place of defence, that the ancient Britons had in all Snowdon; moreover, the greatness of the work shows that it was a princely fortification, strengthened by nature and workmanship." [1]

But in the year 1771, Governor Pownall ascended Penmaenmawr, inspected these remains, and published his account in the Archæologia, vol. iii. p. 303, with a sketch both of the mount and the walls at the summit. The Governor is of opinion that it never was a fortification. He thinks that the inward inclosure contained a carn (or arch-Druid's sepulchre), that there is not room for any lodgment, that the walls are not of a kind which can form a cover, and give at the same time the advantage of fighting from them. In short, that the place was one of the Druids' consecrated high places of worship. He adds, however, that "Mr. Pennant has gone twice over it, intends to make an actual survey, and anticipates much from that great antiquary's knowledge and accuracy."

We turn next to Mr. Pennant, and we find him giving a flat contradiction to the Governor. "I have more than once," [2] says he, "visited this noted rock, to view the fortifications described by the editor of Camden, from some notes of that sensible old baronet, Sir John Wynne, of Gwidir, *and have found his account very just.*

"The fronts of three, if not four walls, presented themselves

[1] Camden, Caernarvonshire.
[2] Pennant's Wales, vol. ii. p. 146.

very distinctly one above the other. I measured the height of one wall, which was at the time nine feet, the thickness seven feet and a half." (Now, Governor Pownall also measured the walls, agrees pretty well with Pennant as to their width, but makes them only five feet high.) "Between these walls, in all parts, were innumerable small buildings, mostly circular. These had been much higher, as is evident from the fall of stones which lie scattered at their bottoms, and probably had once the form of towers, as Sir John asserts. Their diameter is, in *general*, from twelve to eighteen feet (ample room here for lodgment); the walls were in certain places intersected with others equally strong. This stronghold of the Britons is exactly of the same kind with those on Carn Madryn, Carn Boduan, and Tre'r Caer.

"This was most judiciously chosen to cover the passage into Anglesea, and the remoter part of their country; and must, from its *vast strength*, have been invulnerable, except by famine; being inaccessible by its natural steepness towards the sea, and on the parts fortified in the manner described." So far, Pennant *versus* Pownall! "Who shall decide when doctors disagree?" The opinion of both these antiquarians is liable to demur. Governor Pownall might probably be a better judge of military defences than Pennant; but he evidently forms his notions of defence with imperfect knowledge of the forts, which would have amply sufficed for the warfare of the ancient Britons; and moreover, he was one of those led astray by Bryant's crotchets as to "High places," &c. What appears most probable is, that the place was *both* carn and fort; that the strength of the place, and the convenience of stones, suggested the surrounding the narrow area of the central sepulchre with walls, intended for refuge and defence. As to the *circular* buildings, which seem to have puzzled these antiquaries, it is strange that they appear to have overlooked the accounts which serve best to explain them. Strabo says that "the houses of the Britons were round, with a high pointed covering;" Cæsar says that they were only lighted by the door; in the Antonine Column they are represented as *circular*, with an arched entrance, single or double. They were always small, and seem to have contained but a single room. These circular buildings were not, therefore, necessarily Druidical cells, as

has been supposed; nor perhaps actual towers, as contended for by Sir John Wynne; but habitations, after the usual fashion of British houses, for the inmates or garrison of the enclosure. Taking into account the tradition of the spot mentioned by Sir John Wynne, and other traditions still existing, which mark, in the immediate neighbourhood, the scenes of legendary battles, it is hoped that the reader will accept the description in the text as suggesting, amidst conflicting authorities, the most probable supposition of the nature and character of these very interesting remains in the eleventh century,[1] and during the most memorable invasion of Wales (under Harold), which occurred between the time of Geraint, or Arthur, and that of Henry II.

NOTE (M), PAGE 306.

The Idol Bel.

Mons. Johanneau considers that Bel, or Belinus, is derived from the Greek, a surname of Apollo, and means the archer; from Belos, a dart or arrow.[2]

I own I think this among the spurious conceits of the learned, suggested by the vague affinities of name. But it is quite as likely, (if there be anything in the conjecture,) that the Celt taught the Greek, as that the Greek taught the Celt.

There are some very interesting questions, however, for scholars to discuss: viz. 1st, *When* did the Celts first introduce idols? 2d, Can we believe the classical authorities that assure us that the Druids originally admitted no idol worship? If so, we find the chief idols of the Druids cited by Lucan; and they therefore acquired them long before Lucan's time. From whom would they acquire them? Not from the Romans; for the Roman gods are not the least similar to the Celtic, when the last are fairly examined. Nor from the Teutons, from whose deities those of the Celt equally differ. Have we not given too much faith to the classic writers, who assert

[1] The ruins still extant are much diminished since the time even of Pownall or Pennant; and must be indeed inconsiderable, compared with the buildings or walls which existed at the date of my tale.

[2] Johann. ap. Acad. Celt. tom. iii. p. 151.

the original simplicity of the Druid worship? And will not their popular idols be found to be as ancient as the remotest traces of the Celtic existence? Would not the Cimmerii have transported them from the period of their first traditional immigration from the East? and is not their Bel identical with the Babylonian deity?

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